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NO. 583 / DECEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 27, 2006 | **FREE**
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MUSIC: POLITIC LIVE / 48

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GRINCHED

WHILE HOLIDAY SPENDING REACHES NEW HEIGHTS, LOCAL CHARITIES
AREN'T FEELING THE GENEROSITY [ROSS MOROZ / 6]



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ON THE COVER



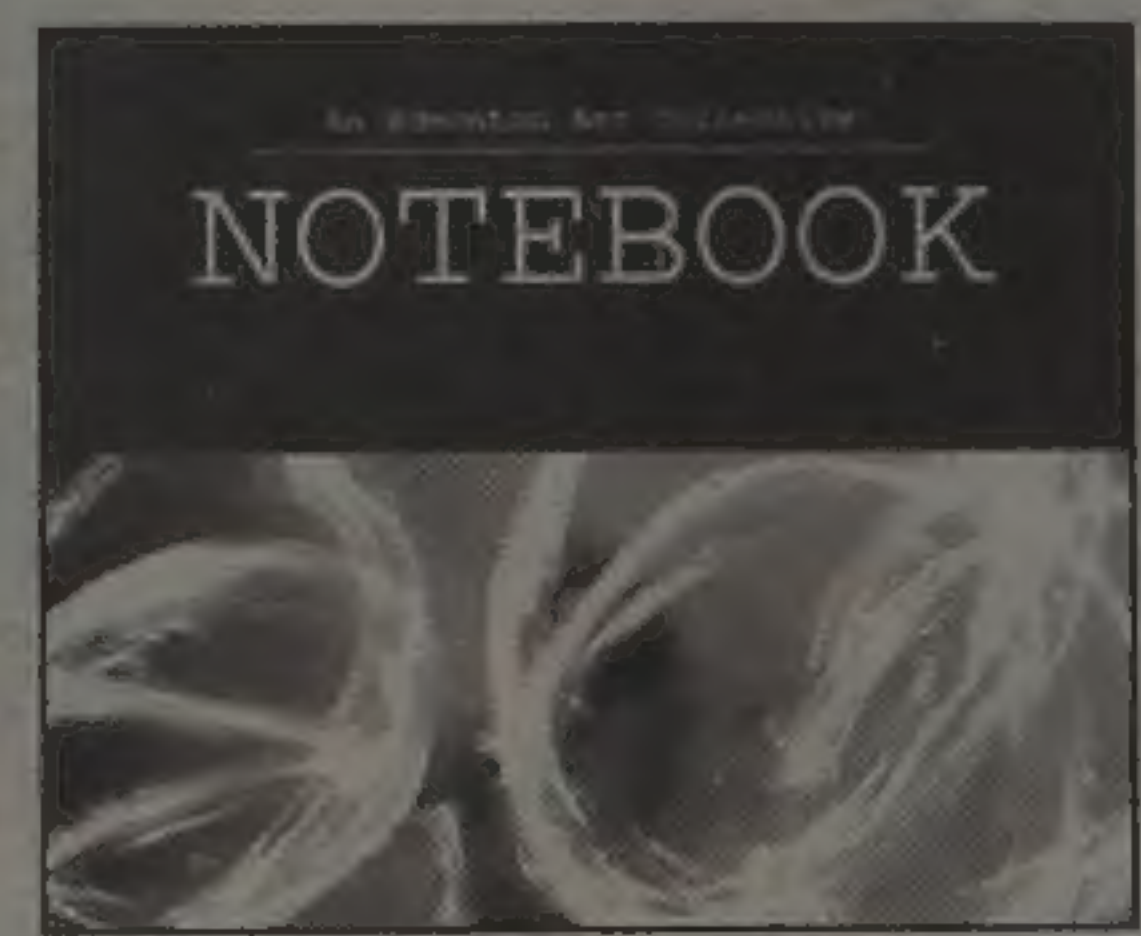
GRINCHED / 6
"This year, we haven't really received many things, so we're making a bit of a cry out to the community to help." —Janelle Aker, spokesperson for the Mission

NEWS



ROMÉO DALLAIRE / 5
"When you come back to that 20 per cent of haves, you're torn by the fact that as you breathe and ingest the opulence of 20 per cent, you're wracked by a sense of guilt, knowing that there are large numbers of people who are also breathing the same air, but who are living in the most vicious inhuman conditions." —Roméo Dallaire, retired lieutenant-general

BOOKS



LAUNCHING NOTEBOOK / 27
"It seems like Edmonton's starting to get away from a bit of that blue collar image more, and certainly we're big enough to warrant something like this." —Steven Teeuwssen, managing editor

Spot the typo!

We're not especially good spellers, as some of you are fond of pointing out, so we can pretty much guarantee that there's a typo, grammatical error or some other boo-boo in this issue. The first several people (rather arbitrarily chosen) to send an e-mail to carolyn@vueweekly.com detailing such a find win their pick from the pile of astoundingly horrible CDs in our offices. And we're losing the battle—our pile is closing in on 400. Help!

Last week, you were nice enough to point out that we had a missing "c" in accomodations and a missing "e" in seperate. Oh, and we also decided to give the week an extra day on the cover. From us to you, intrepid and patient typo-spotters: happy holidays!

MUSIC



NIGHTSTALKERS / 48
"The rock 'n' roll-billy thing is way better up in Edmonton, and we really like the cheap beer. We just want people to get hosed, smash shit and have a good time." —Kris Leasak, upright drummer

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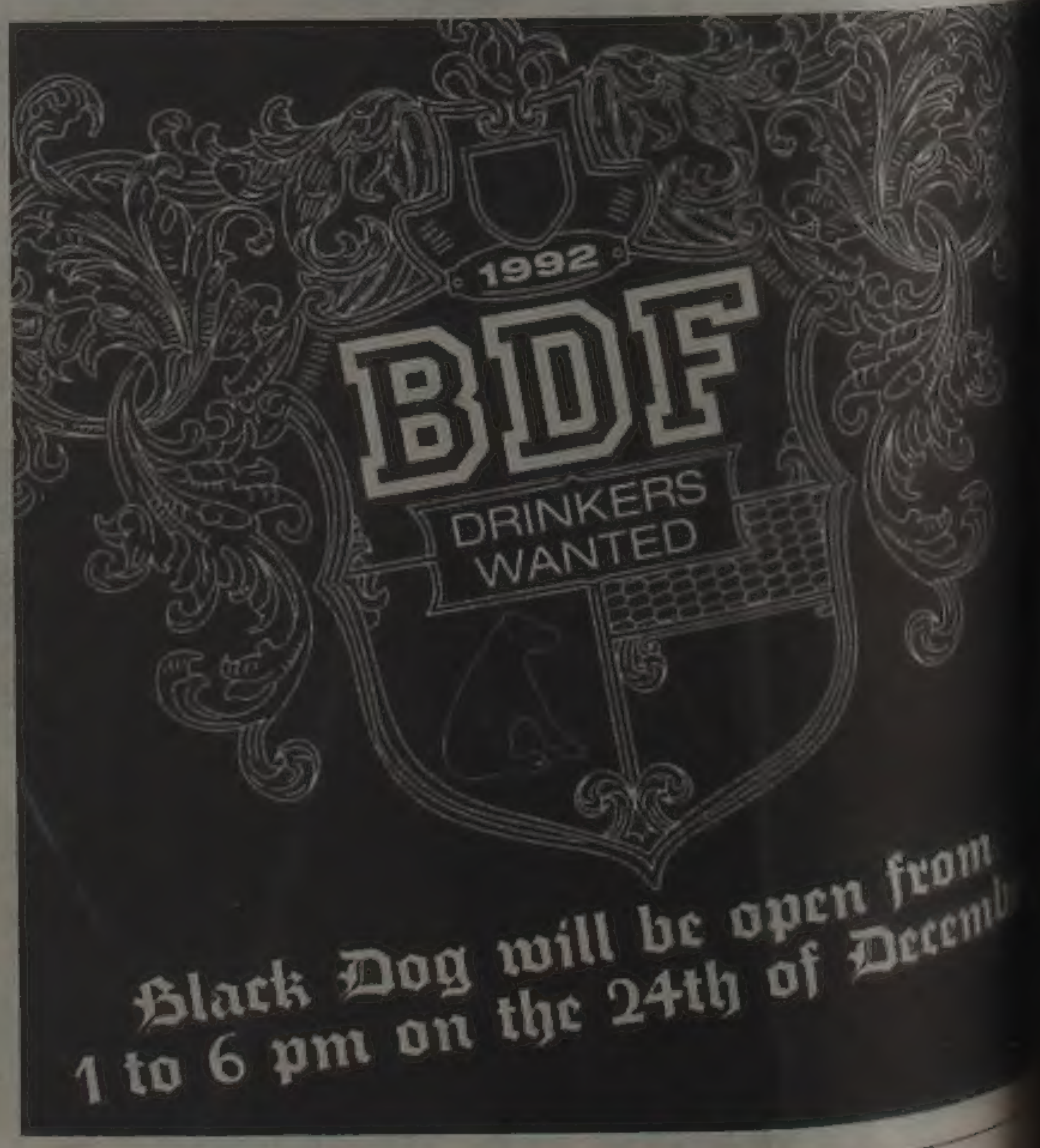
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Politics aren't very ladylike

ROSS MOROZ / ross@vueweekly.com

The headline in the *Globe and Mail* this week was decidedly curt. "PM to axe Ambrose" it read, while the *Calgary Sun* reported "PM to strip Ambrose of portfolio" in equally blunt fashion.

Embattled Environment Minister Rona Ambrose, it turns out, will be shuffled off in favour of Calgary MP Jim Prentice sometime in the new year.

Ambrose herself, meanwhile, has told reporters that she's heard no such thing (the articles quotes "anonymous sources" and "government leaks") and generally seems a little broadsided by the news.

It all comes off as a little junior high—you know, everyone knows a girl is about to get dumped but the girl—and this juvenilia speaks volumes about how the Conservatives feel about women in politics.

Rona Ambrose has been a laughably inept environment minister, granted, but it's not like she had much of a fighting chance. Ambrose was originally put into the position because her appointment allowed Prime Minister Stephen Harper to kill a number of birds with one stone. Ambrose is (relatively) young, female and represents an urban riding, all qualities that are at a bit of a premium in the Conservative caucus. So having her in cabinet looks good and helps deflect criticism that the Tories are just a club of old white guys from the sticks.

But you wouldn't want to put a chick in an *important* job (what if she has "feminine problems" during a budget vote? What if she bursts out in tears during question period?), so you stick the pretty little thing with something about which you don't give a damn—that is, until the make-work project you gave her starts to become sort of an issue with the voters. Then you have to move her on to something else and let someone you actually have faith in—you know, one of the boys—take over.

Of course, using women strategically isn't exactly anything new in Canadian politics (remember when the Tories left Kim Campbell holding the bag in 1993?), but the fact that such insidious and thinly veiled sexism still dictates how women in politics are treated goes a long way to explaining why there remains such a dearth of women pursuing public office even in a country as ostensibly progressive and enlightened as ours. Oh well—at least Ambrose's replacement won't have to put up with jokes about his hair. ▼



Edmonton Transit tries out hybrid buses

ROSS MOROZ / ross@vueweekly.com

Edmonton Transit is engaging in a little bit of tire-kicking this winter.

Two diesel-electric hybrid buses went into service in Edmonton on Mon, Dec 18. The buses are manufactured by Mississauga's Orion Bus Industries, a division of Daimler-Chrysler, and are designed to use as little as 50 per cent of the fuel burned up by traditional diesel buses in optimal operating conditions.

Under ordinary operating conditions in cities where similar buses are already in use, however, the real number is closer to 80 per cent, but it is unknown how the buses will fare in our city's cold climate and relatively high altitude.

As such, ETS will be working with the University of Alberta to monitor the two buses, which are currently servicing route 106 between West Edmonton Mall and Capilano, as well as two different kinds of hybrid buses built by Winnipeg-based New Flyer—who also supply Vancouver and Toronto's transit systems—which go into service once they are delivered sometime next year.

THE ORION BUSES, which cost upwards of \$530 000 US—60 per



NEWS | TRANSIT

cent more than traditional diesel buses—are already a major part of transit systems in several major cities, including New York, where the Metropolitan Transportation Authority already has more than 500 of the buses in service and is in the process of adding 300 more.

According to a recent study by the US National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the fuel efficiency of MTA's hybrid busses is 30 per cent better than its traditional diesel buses and

between 60 and 120 per cent better than natural gas vehicles.

"The test is part of Edmonton Transit's commitment to explore innovative new technologies to help provide safe, efficient and environmentally friendly service," said ETS bus fleet, equipment and maintenance supervisor Jim Bryant in a press release. He also noted that the new buses' performance, maintenance costs, economy, reliability, noise and emissions will be recorded and analyzed, while customers will be surveyed to gauge their reaction to the new vehicles. ▼

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shake hands with the Lieutenant-General

ROMÉO DALLAIRE STILL AFFECTED BY THE 'VICIOUS INHUMANITY' HE'S WITNESSED

CONRAD / carl@vuwweekly.com

He is a noted humanitarian, a Governor General's award-winning author, and, of course, a Senator, but retired Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire is best known for his work as Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda during that country's genocide.

In 1994, over 800 000 Rwandan men, women and children were slaughtered under the watchful eyes of the international community—a community that denied Dallaire the appropriate means to stymie the atrocities. The horrors to which he bore witness left a scar of profound post-traumatic stress, but Dallaire has done his best to transform his experience into a vehicle for positive change.

In Edmonton last month to speak at a function prepared by the city's Ubuntu organization—an NGO devoted to improving the living conditions of women and children who are victims of the Rwandan genocide—Dallaire took some time out of his schedule to talk with *Vue Weekly* about his experiences and his views on Canada's role in resolving international conflicts.

WEEKLY: How do you think Canada has been faring in Afghanistan?

DALLAIRE: Afghanistan is exactly where we should be. We are in an era of conflict resolution, where some of the conflicts are relatively benign like Timor, and others are rather complex like Afghanistan. When a country is moving towards good governance and democracy, it is the role of the developed world and leading middle powers to commit themselves to advancing those ideals. If there are extremists within those countries that are against every humanitarian law in order to impose with aggression and intolerance a method of life that goes against the grain of fundamental human rights, then this country has to invest in cash, sweat, tears and blood to liberate them. Human rights are not just for the rich.

In 2004 you were appointed as a Special Advisor to the Canadian Government on War Affected Children and Small Arms Distribution. Where has your work on child soldiers taken you? Have you been in the field in Sierra

NEWS FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Leone and Darfur, working on a three-year project on child soldiers that will also use the Congo as the target country. In my quest to eradicate the use of child soldiers, I have realized that the world has crossed many unnecessary Rubicons. In the 1980s, we crossed the Rubicon of child soldiery. In the 1990s, we crossed the Rubicon of genocide. However, in regards to eradicating child soldiery, we've done a lot on the paper side, but not a lot on the practical side.

VW: Rwanda is currently adhering to two different judicial systems in order to move beyond the 1994 genocide. The international tribunal in Arusha, which is administered by the United Nations, embodies one; the other is the gacaca system, which is a quintessentially Rwandan form of justice administered by local communities. Could you comment on the efficacy of each?

RD: First, I think that the international tribunal was under-staffed, under-funded, under-directed and has been used by those sitting in Brussels and the Hague as the whipping boy of the process. It's easy to get a tribunal going in Europe, but if you're going to start one in a hick town out in Africa, you need to pump it full of resources in order to ensure its quality. Second, the Arusha trial, in my estimation, should have been conducted in Rwanda, just like the trial in Sierra Leone. Third, the massive numbers of prisoners and the horrific state in which they were kept went against every principle of human rights and justice, and so a solution was absolutely essential to give the Rwandans a sense that justice was being done. This is gacaca.

I am, however, concerned that the sentencing is not at a level that adequately compensates the victims. As those who perpetrated the rapes, the killings and the destruction of houses come back in to the communities, those who have suffered should also be compensated. In Rwanda, the survivors have not been compensated or supported by the central government.

You must compensate the victims, or else you won't get serenity.

VW: Do you think Canada's response to this summer's war between Lebanon and Israel was appropriate?

RD: First, let me speak more generally about the region. I've got a real problem with the Middle East when I see religion intimately involved in the political processes that create divi-

sion. The Middle East has an incredibly complex mixture of religions and political methodologies that are not necessarily liberal democratic methodologies. These methodologies demand the question: which is worse? A government that permits its soldiers to shoot children, or a government that uses children to shoot others? You don't really seem to be able to find a lot of good guys on either side

that seem to have the statesmanship that requires humility and flexibility and a heavy dose of conciliation to get the peace process going.

Last summer's event was reflective of that exasperating scenario. The Israelis used force in an irresponsible fashion. They created a tactically poor identification of targets, and the scale

CONTINUES ON PAGE 11



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How the boom stole Christmas

LOCAL CHARITIES SURPRISED TO FEEL THE PINCH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

ROSS MOROZ / ross@vancouverweekly.com

If one ignores, as many of us do, the religious foundation of the whole thing, Christmas (or "the holidays" or whatever) is, in a 21st century North American context, a primarily economic event.

And from a purely financial standpoint, it would appear that Albertans are leading the country in, ahem, Christmas spirit. According to research conducted by Visa, the average Albertan planned to spend \$1 042 on gifts this holiday season, compared to the national average of roughly \$900, and almost all retailers in the province are reporting that traffic and consumer spending is way up over previous years.

So it would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that Edmonton, with its super-heated economy, high level of employment and relatively low taxes—not to mention its status as home to the shrine of retail consumerism that is West Edmonton Mall—is poised to be having its merriest, happiest, most bountiful Christmas ever, with a stack of presents under every tree and more than enough good cheer and tidings of comfort and joy to go around. Well ...

"The boom has had mixed results," explained the Edmonton Food Bank's Marjorie Bencz, whose organization provides hampers to 12 000 Edmonton households every month.

"People who are doing well might assume that everybody is doing well, and that's just not the case," she continued. "People who don't have as much money as most are struggling more, because rent is going up and the cost of living is going up but their resources are staying the same."

AND THE FOOD BANK isn't the only local charity discovering that a surprising number of Edmontonians aren't having the merriest of Christmases.

"We are finding there is an increased need and that more people are coming to us for help," admitted Salvation Army communications director Karen Diaper, who like Bencz believes that the city's economic

NEWS | HOLIDAYS

boom has been a mixed blessing for many Edmontonians.

"We're finding that a lot of people who maybe were doing okay and trying as best as they can," she said, "but with increasing rents and that kind of thing, these people now don't have quite enough to make ends meet."

The Hope Mission, the local social care agency that operates the Herb Jamieson Centre as well as a youth outreach program and a centre for women in need, is also seeing increased demand for its services this holiday season.

"Homelessness has increased quite a bit in relation to last year's numbers," reports the Hope Mission's Janelle Aker, whose charity faces an increased crunch at this time of year as it hosts four turkey dinners at which a total of over 3 000 disadvantaged Edmontonians are fed a holiday meal. The Mission also tries to find a way to give all of its clients—especially the children it serves—a small gift at this time of year.

"We have a women's transitional housing program, and some of these women have children, plus we have a youth shelter and we like to be able to provide these people with gifts," Aker explained. "It's nothing elaborate—just small things like toiletries and new socks and new mittens and things like that."

BUT WHILE THE ECONOMIC boom in our city seems to be at least partially to blame for social aid agencies seeing an increased need for their services this holiday season, surely this increase in economic activity must also be helping these agencies to raise money. I mean, sure, the poor seem to be left out in the cold by the boom, but certainly some of the people profiting from this province's favourable economy are being more generous because of their increasing wealth. Aren't they?

"This year, we haven't really received as many things, so we're

making a bit of a cry out to the community to help," the Hope Mission's Aker said, explaining that her organization is hoping that, by raising awareness of shortfall, they may still meet their goals by Christmas.

"Christmas is usually the time that we receive a lot of brand-new donations on top of the second-hand donations we get all year, and a lot of those donations will be given to clients as Christmas presents," she continued. "Financially, we've been doing okay for donations, and we're really grateful for those, but we don't want to have to spend that money—which is usually put towards meals—on Christmas presents."

The Salvation Army is facing an even more acute shortfall this season.

"At the moment we are still needing to raise another \$100 000 to meet our goals for this season," Diaper said, noting that the charity is also facing a severe shortage of personnel as well as funding.

"We've been having trouble getting as many volunteers as we need," she explained. "Whether that's because more people are having to work and don't have the time, I'm not sure, but we need help, and we are still looking for more volunteers right now."

Even the Edmonton Food Bank, an organization that has become almost synonymous with Christmas in Edmonton thanks to its affiliation with holiday events around the city, is having mixed results this holiday season.

"Well we're sitting at about 60 per cent [of our goal] for food and about 50 per cent for money, at this point," said Bencz. "so we're encouraging people to support us at things like Candy Cane Lane and Bright Nights, which are both running for a while longer yet."

But despite the gloomy, Scrooge-esque numbers being reported by these organizations, Bencz can't help but feel optimistic that the generosity and goodwill of Edmontonians is just a little bit delayed this year.

"We're behind last year's numbers for money, but our food is up," she reported cheerfully, "and, hey, it's not over yet." ▼



Labour shortage hits ho ho home for local malls

All year retailers from across the province have been bemoaning the dearth of cheap labour in Alberta, and throughout the holiday season merchants have complained of being short staffed, with many stores being forced to restrict their hours or offer reduced services due to a lack of workers.

So maybe it's not surprising that, in an economy where even fast-food restaurants are offering wages that are nearly double the recently raised minimum wage, many local malls are finding it

harder and harder to fill their most important job opening at this time of year. Santas are harder to come by than ever this holiday season, with many local shopping centres scrambling to find someone to fill the big black boots as parents relate anecdotes of encountering lethargic, poorly costumed, unenthusiastic and even drunken jolly old elves when they take their children to sit on Santa's knee.

None of this, however, should come as much of a shock, at least according

to the man known as "Canada's best Santa."

"Even regular service jobs are getting \$12," complained Victor Nevada, the headmaster of Calgary's Santa School, "so why the hell would you go work [as Santa] for that amount of money?"

According to Nevada, mall Santas, who are paid "anywhere from minimum wage to about \$12 on average," have to be "actors, child psychologists, costumers and make-up experts" and are usually responsible for the purchase and

upkeep of their suit. In his mind, the various incarnations of Saint Nick seen perched in cheesy winter scenes in malls across the nation are grossly underpaid.

"A mall Santa that would be considered well paid in Canada would probably make about \$25," Nevada explained, "but really they should be making at least \$50 an hour."

Nevada has no sympathy for mall managers spending the pre-Christmas months searching desperately for a suitable Kris Kringle ("All the good Santas

have basically been booked by the end of February," he noted), but in his mind a solution to this Santa crisis is simple: pay more.

"It's a hard, hard business, and malls only paying \$15 to \$25 an hour can see why they're having trouble getting Santas," he insisted. "I mean, would you do that for \$15 an hour?"

"The people who say 'would you fries with that' get \$15 an hour," laughed, "so maybe Santa should be saying that, too." ▼

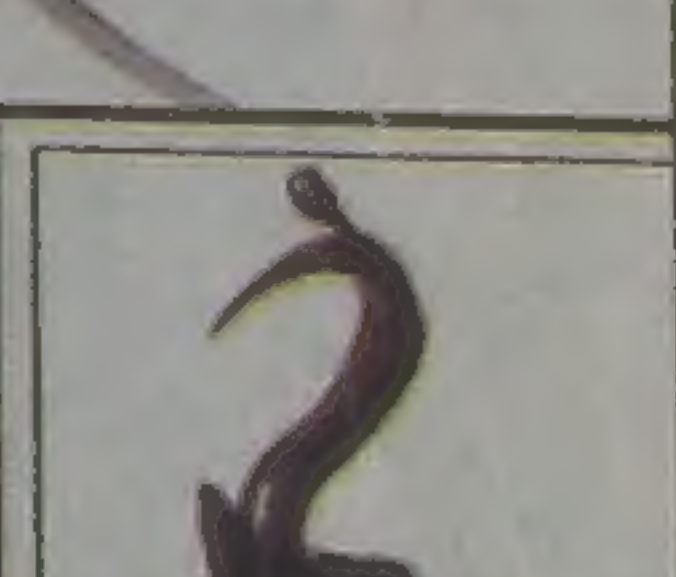
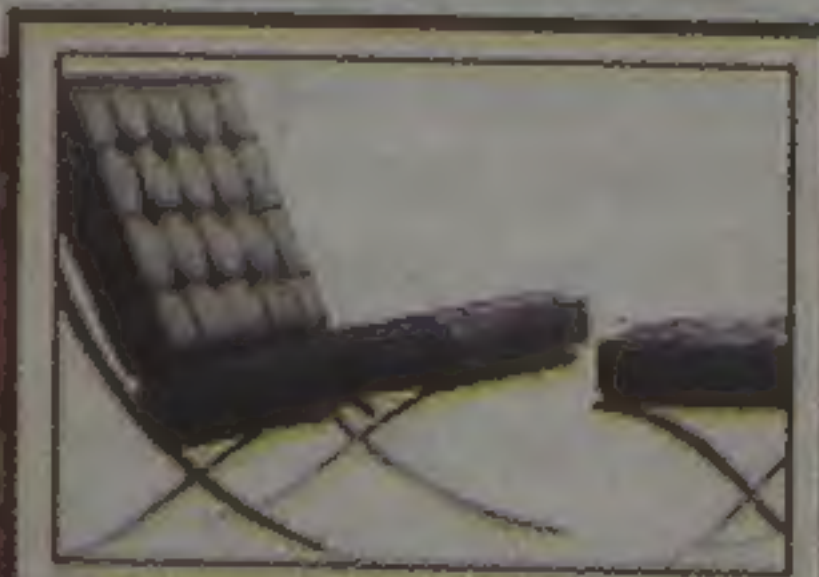
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Great Britain banks on carbon credits to reduce heavy fuel consumption

COMMENT

DYER STRAIGHT

GWYNNE DYER

gwynne@vuwweekly.com

Here's the plan: everybody in the country will get the same allowance for how much carbon dioxide they can emit each year, and every time they buy some product that involves carbon dioxide emissions—filling their car, paying their utility bills, buying an airline ticket—carbon points are deducted from their credit or debit cards. Like Air Miles, only in reverse.

So if you ride a bike everywhere, insulate your home and don't travel much, you can sell your unused points back to the system. And if you use up your allowance before the end of the year, then you will have to buy extra points from the system.

This is no lunatic proposal from the eco-radical fringe. It is on the verge of becoming British government policy, and environment secretary David Miliband is supportive. In fact, he is hoping to launch a pilot scheme quite soon, with the goal of moving to a comprehensive national scheme of carbon rationing within five years.

Ever since a delegation of scientists persuaded Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, a scientist herself, to start taking climate change seriously back in the late 1980s, British governments of both parties have been in the forefront on the issue, but Miliband's initiative breaks new ground. It has, says Miliband, "a simplicity and beauty that would reward carbon thrift."

Previous emissions-trading systems—the sulfur dioxide system mandated by the 1990 Clean Air Act in the United States, the 25-country European Union scheme for trading CO2 emission permits launched in 2005, the system for trading emission allowances at national level among developed countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol—all envisage large industrial organizations or even entire countries making the deals. Miliband is bringing it down to the personal level.

A HUGE SHARE OF total emissions is driven by the decisions of individual consumers. Miliband thinks that the least intrusive, most efficient way of shaping those decisions is to set up a system that tracks everybody's use of goods and services that produce a lot of greenhouse gases, and rewards the thrifty while imposing higher costs on the profligate. And there is no time to lose: the world's carbon emissions have to stop growing within 10 to 15 years, he says, and Britain must cut its total carbon emissions by 60 percent in the next thirty or forty years.

"We are in a dangerous place now," he told the *Guardian* newspaper last week, "and it is going to be very difficult to get into a less dangerous place. The science is getting worse faster than the politics is getting better. People know the technology exists to get a lot of this done ... but there is a huge chasm of mistrust between countries about how to do this.

... The developing countries won't take any carbon reduction targets until they believe the countries that have caused the problem do so."

The science certainly is "getting worse," in the sense that every forecast is worse than the one before. The recent assessment of the state of the Arctic by the International Panel on Climate Change, whose full fourth report due next year, was published early in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* last week because its forecast was so alarming.

If current trends persist, the Arctic Ocean will be entirely ice-free in the summertime not in 2080, as previous casts suggested, but by 2040, just 33 years from now. Then the dark ocean face absorbs much more heat than reflective ice did, and another element of feedback kicks in, and the speed of warming increases again...

If current trends persist, the Arctic Ocean will be entirely ice-free in the summertime not in 2080 as previous forecasts suggested, but by 2040 just 33 years from now.

THOSE IN THE KNOW are very frightened, but there is still that "huge chasm of mistrust." The developing countries that are only now beginning to emit large amounts of greenhouse gases look at the mountain of past emissions produced by the developed countries, the source of most current climate change, and want the rich countries to cut back more deeply—deeply enough to leave the developing countries some room to increase their consumption without dooming us to runaway climate change.

That's where the long-range target of 60 per cent emission cuts for Britain comes from. Britain only produces 13 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, so a 60 per cent cut in Britain is still only a drop in the bucket, but the aim is to set an example: see, we can do this without impoverishing ourselves, other developed countries can, too. If they do, then a deal to control the growth of emissions in the developing countries is within reach.

So individual carbon credit accounts for all, and if you want to do things that produce more carbon dioxide than your annual allowance, you pay for it. The rich and the poor can sell their unused credits back into the system—and every year or so, as the average carbon efficiency of transport or food production or power generation improves a little, the size of the free personal carbon allowance is reduced a little bit. In the suspect, the shape of things to come.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles have been published in 45 countries. His column appears regularly in *Vue Weekly*.

Issues is a forum for individuals and organizations to comment on current events and broader issues of importance to the community. Their commentary is not necessarily the opinion of the organizations they represent or of *Vue Weekly*.

It's hard not to be suspicious of oil industry-backed royalty review

RICARDO ACUÑA / www.ualberta.ca/parkland
 I am not some out-of-control conspiracy theorist, but I have been following Alberta politics long enough to know that when things look too good to be true, Albertans are probably getting screwed. This was exactly the feeling I had last week when Premier Stelmach announced one of his government's first orders of business would be a non-political review of Alberta's royalty regime for oil and gas. This should actually be great news for Albertans. The Parkland Institute has been calling for a full review of royalties since 1999, and recently the Pembina Institute and numerous other voices have echoed this call.

When our return is maximized, there are limits on the obscene profits the oil companies can make of our natural legacy

This review is long over-due, and Premier Stelmach's stated commitment to an open and transparent process without political interference and ample opportunity for public input is definitely positive. As always, however, much of what comes out of the process will depend on who is at the table. The only thing the Premier has said thus far is that the review will be conducted by a "panel of experts."

This is concerning because, historically, the provincial government has only been willing to acknowledge the expertise of industry-friendly economists on questions of royalties, and experts from groups like Parkland and Pembina have been dismissed.

If this turns out to be the case again, there really is no need for a review. I tell you today what conclusions the panel will come to, and we could save ourselves a lot of time and money.

WHAT REALLY HAS ME nervous, however, is how the industry itself reacted to Premier's announcement of a royalty review. In the past, even up until last month, whenever anybody suggested that royalties were too low and should be increased, the industry (as represented by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers or CAPP) responded loudly and angrily, saying that if we raised royalties, companies would either go broke or have to leave the province, or making some claim that the companies are barely making money as it is. The responses were always the same, regardless of whether it was the Parkland Institute suggesting a review of royalties or Peter Lougheed. But when Premier Stelmach announced

the review last week, the response was markedly different. "We think it will be a good opportunity to talk about how the royalty system works to the public," said Greg Stringham, a vice-president with CAPP, welcoming the review. "This will help provide some education as well as receiving input."

Perhaps I am overly cynical, but after 13 years of Ralph Klein style consultations where outcomes are pre-determined, my reaction to CAPP's statement was "what do they know that I don't?"

Has Premier Stelmach already cleared the panel with CAPP? Will CAPP be helping to set the terms of reference for the review? Will any recommendations be cleared by them before the government acts on them? All of these moves would be consistent with a Klein-style review. Will Stelmach remain "steady" or actually change the way things are done? It remains to be seen.

IN THE MEAN TIME, CAPP continues to insist that the reason a majority of Albertans are behind increasing royalties is because we do not really understand how they work. They seem convinced that if Albertans only understood the technicalities behind why more than half of oil-sands projects are only paying one cent on the dollar, we would never ask for an increase again.

The reality is that Albertans are showing a greater understanding of royalties today than we ever have before. More and more, Albertans understand fundamentally that royalties are not a tax or a grab on profits. We are keenly aware that, as the owners of the resource, we have a right and responsibility to charge a price for that resource that reflects its true value to us and all future generations of Albertans.

With that recognition comes a desire to ensure that we as owners are maximizing the return from our resource. And this, I suspect, is the reason that CAPP is now so interested in "educating" Albertans about royalties—when our return is maximized, there are limits on the obscene profits the oil companies can make of our natural legacy.

Clearly, by "education" they mean convincing us to keep giving them this incredibly valuable resource for next to nothing. Stringham's comments above show that CAPP sees the government's review as just the opportunity to accomplish this miseducation.

Let's hope the Premier does not give them a platform for doing this. And even if he does, let's hope Albertans stand up loud and clear to assert their ownership rights over our oil and gas. It may be the only chance we get. ▼

Ricardo Acuña is Executive Director of the Parkland Institute, a non-partisan public policy research institute housed at the University of Alberta.



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California activist couple encourages us all to, uh, cum in peace

ROSS MOROZ / ross@vviewweekly.com

Forget trying to bring about peace on earth this holiday season with traditional actions like marches, sit-ins, letter writing campaigns and the like. A California peace-activist couple have a more novel and fun—or vaguely creepy, depending on your perspective—form of mass protest in mind.

The First Annual Solstice Synchronized Global Orgasm for Peace is the brainchild of Marin, California, peaceniks Donna Sheehan and Paul Reffell, who are encouraging the world's citizens to concentrate on world peace while having an orgasm on Dec 22, the winter solstice.

On their website, globalorgasm.org, the couple explains that "the mission of the Global Orgasm is to effect change in the energy field of the Earth through input of the largest possible surge of human energy.

NEWS HIPPIES

"The combination of high-energy orgasmic energy combined with mindful intention may have a much greater effect than previous mass meditations and prayers," the manifesto continues. "The goal is to add so much concentrated and high-energy positive input into the energy field of the Earth that it will reduce the current dangerous levels of aggression and violence throughout the world."

IN A CONVERSATION with *Vue*, the event's organizers admit that, while the salaciousness of the idea has certainly helped to publicize the Global Orgasm, they see the idea as being about much more than just sex.

"Everyone knows that sex sells—we realized the power of sex and how per-



vasive that power is around the world," said Sheehan. "But we're separating orgasm from sex. Sex is very loaded, but orgasm is a biological function."

"We made it very middle of the road, so that even American conservatives could do this without feeling too dirty about it," Reffell interjected, "even if they don't want to tell anyone they're doing it."

Despite the word "synchronized"

figuring prominently in the event's title, interested parties are given no specific moment at which to, uh, participate, and are instead instructed to join in the fun "at the time of your choosing, in the place of your choosing and with as much privacy as you choose."

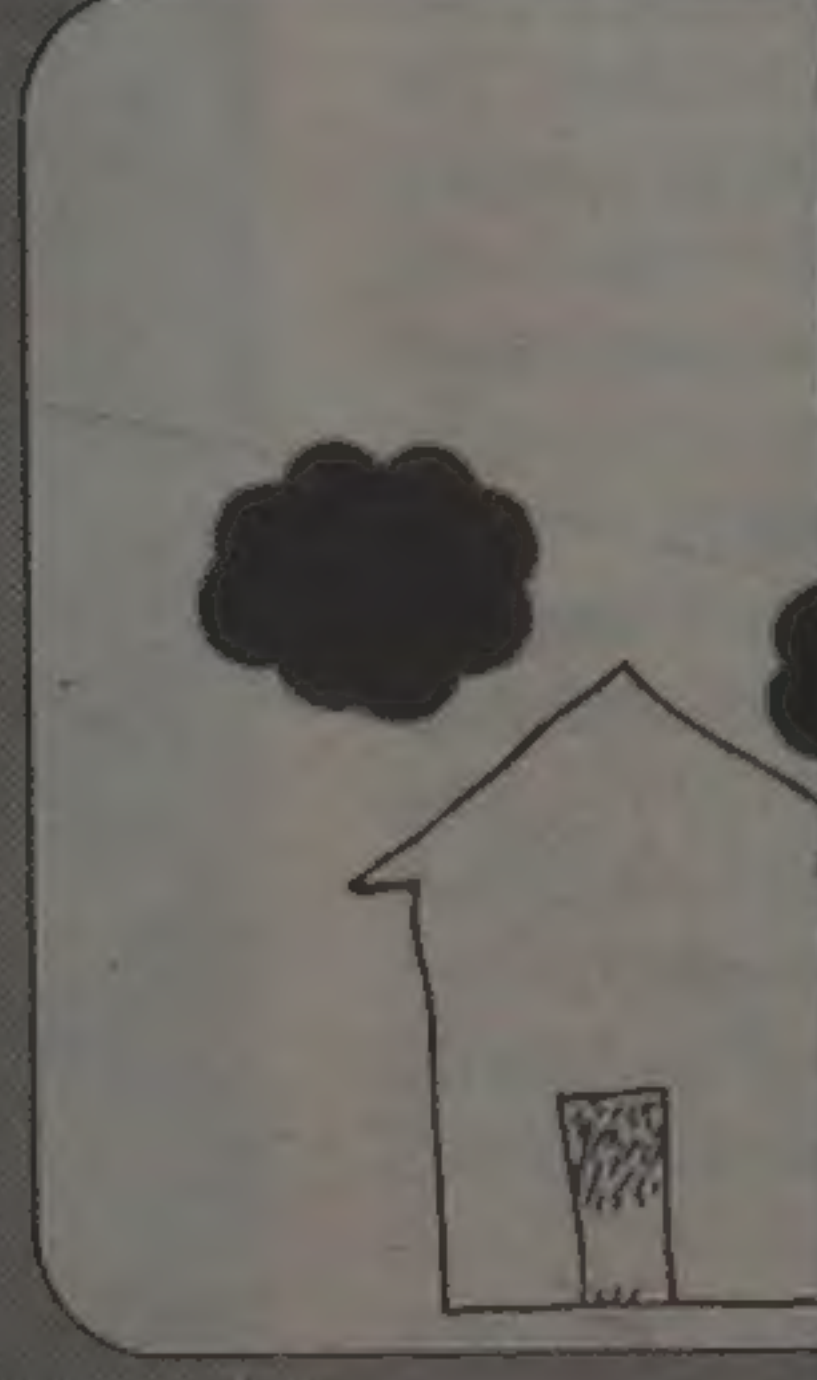
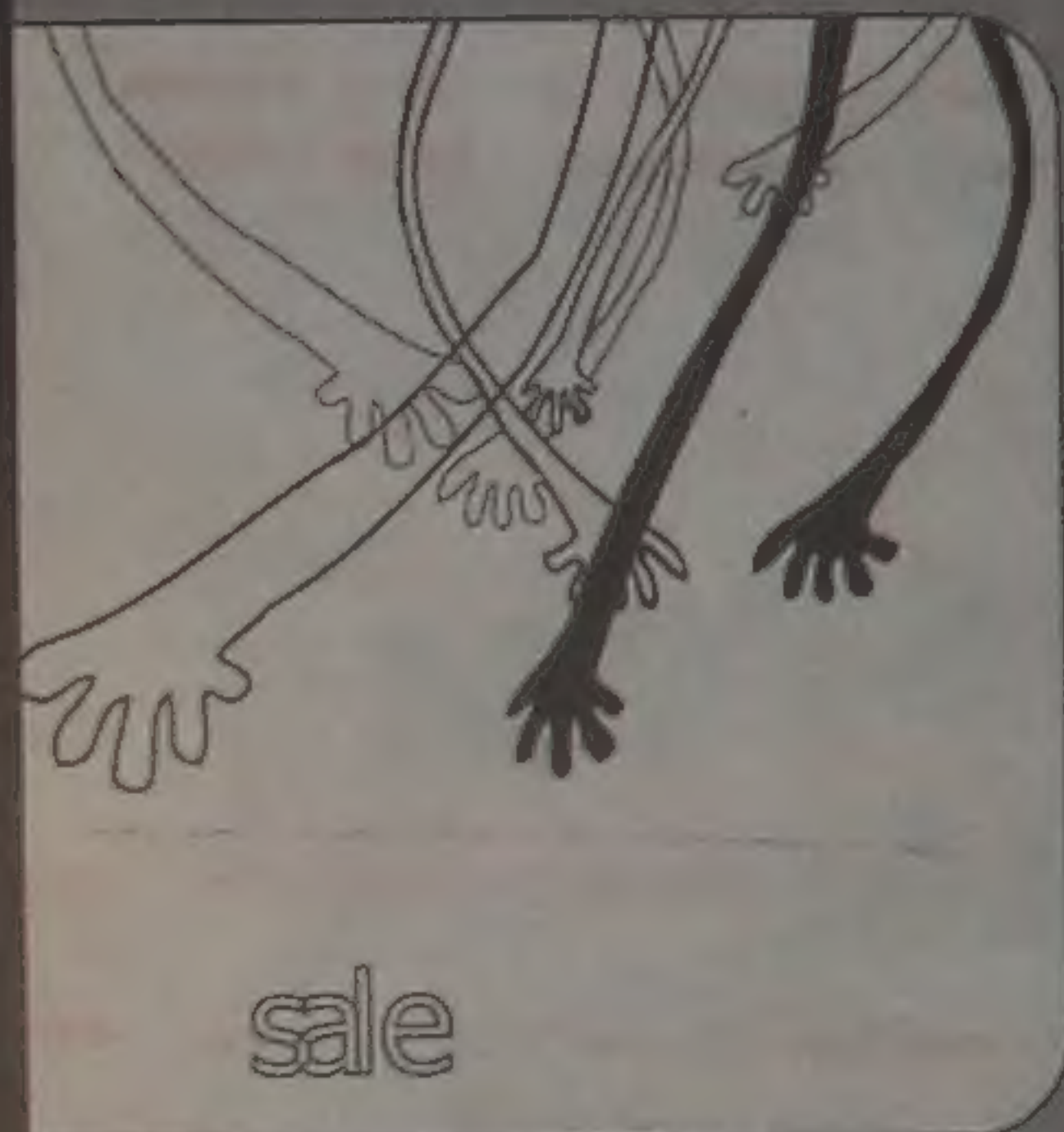
"Our dream was to have everyone orgasm simultaneously," Sheehan admitted, "but with six billion people in the world, and with how complicat-

ed our lives are, it would be impossible to get businesses shut down, people to get some time off or anything like that all at the same time, especially on the Friday before Christmas. So we're just being realistic."

Sheehan and Reffell reported a response to the concept from "mainstream media" has been surprisingly positive, although they have an odd detractor.

"We've had some criticism from 'serious activists' saying this is frivolous," Reffell explained, "but really the whole point of the thing is to get people thinking about and talking about peace and global consciousness in a different way."

"One woman wrote an email saying, 'I'm trying about the environmental impact,'" Sheehan added dryly. "I know, because everyone was going to be lighting a cigarette directly afterwards." ▼



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victims that were directly related to Israeli use of force is deplorable. However, [with respect to Lebanon], it is inconceivable that a government would allow a militia to report thousands upon thousands of missiles that they know will be used as offensive weapons against another country. This is not an example of an effective democracy. There's enormous responsibility on the Lebanese government in terms of permitting things like that happening on their land. They should seek international support to deal with Hezbollah. Within the context of the rule of law, I consider Hezbollah to be completely irresponsible when they use civilians as human shields in order to protect their combat forces. There is absolutely no margin of error in as much as they are dead guilty of abuses of human rights, and in my opinion they are open to the question of crimes against humanity. On the other hand, when [Israel's] offensive forces knew full well that civilians were being used as shields in protection of the enemy, the use of force that will knowingly result in civilian casualties is just as irresponsible. They have other means that could have been considered, such as the use of their ground forces rather than an air component. Oftentimes, when an individual returns home from a traumatic experience abroad, they feel the need to become invulnerable. They no longer feel that they can talk candidly around the people with whom they used to feel comfortable. How can one best reconcile one's experiences with social reality? I think that when you've lived these experiences, you tend to want to capture the reality of humanity. Is the reality of humanity what the 20 per cent of us that are the "haves" are living with, in their conditions of plenty and serenity? Or is the reality that is going on with the 80 per cent

of humans—living in absolutely inhuman conditions, in the mud, the blood and the suffering of the greatest abuses one can imagine, from humanitarian catastrophes to genocide? When you come back to that 20 per cent of haves, you're torn by the fact that as you breathe and ingest the opulence of the 20 per cent, you're wracked by a sense of guilt, knowing that there are large numbers of people who are also breathing the same air, but who are living in the most vicious inhuman

conditions. So how do you reconcile yourself? I think that reconciliation demands that you never hesitate to bring to the attention of the haves the opulence in which they are living. Yes, that opulence comes from excellent technology and hard work, but also from a European history that stole from the 80 per cent of humanity living in European colonies. To give yourself an escape valve, you must feel free to bring up your experiences with those

who haven't experienced. To gain far more satisfaction, however, I can say that there is an enormous amount of serenity that can be acquired by joining an NGO. Any NGO that is working for the benefit of humanity is a worthy endeavour. It's committing yourself to an NGO abroad, if that's possible, or an NGO here at home. Lastly, there is an absolute requirement to maintain a sense of optimism. Cynicism results in a state of

total disconnect with your being. It results in depression. Optimism comes from following, the recognition that you're in to a long-term exercise. Global conflict will take centuries to resolve. The advancement of human rights is moving and gaining through international agencies like the UN. There will be millions upon millions that will suffer in the process. But one day, the serenity that every human being seeks will be found. When friction ends, that day will come. ▽

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Staying healthy over the holidays is easier than you'd think

HEALTH

WELL, WELL, WELL

CONNIE HOWARD
health@viveweekly.com

I tend to vent rather than give advice, but, in the spirit of holiday giving, I have these holiday health tips to offer.

Tip number one: make sure you get a healthy dose of people who aren't so tied in knots they can't tolerate making mistakes or others laughing at them. People like my friend who, last week after a glass or two of wine, mixed up her vowels and emitted a surprising FUN ... facking ... tastic, and is still, after my laughing about it, seemingly happy to be my friend.

Tip number two: limit time spent with cantankerous family members that create undue levels of stress for you, and don't feel guilty about it. Seriously. It's so bad for your health to hang with people that dislike or belittle you, so bad to feel guilt, and equally bad to drink copiously to help

you cope.

Tip number three: if you're going to eat shortbread (I am), make your own so you can use organic butter instead of regular hormone-laden butter or trans-fat-laden butter substitutes. Which is critical—especially for women, as boobs make great long-term storage sites for fat-soluble hormones and hormone-mimicking chemicals found in butter and butter substitutes that contribute to all the breast cancers we ostensibly don't know a cause for.

Tip number four: if you're going to eat chocolate (I am), you're in luck—you won't have to make your own. Excellent quality is available, just read the ingredients list and avoid those with ingredients you can't pronounce or don't recognize as food.

Tip number five: don't read the mainstream health news. It causes anxiety (over food-poisoning, super-bugs, SARS, bird flu, E coli, C difficile and other threats we have little control over), and offers false hope (with the perfect phar-

maceutical on the distant and ever-disappearing horizon).

Tip number six: don't buy a snow blower, even though they're all the rage right now. If you have a walk or a driveway to shovel, enjoy the fresh air and exercise.

TIP NUMBER SEVEN (for those with little ones): if you happen to have children pulling on their ears and fussing, which is oh-so-common during flu season, remember that you don't need to rush right-this-second to an over-crowded emergency room to get them on antibiotics. Because now, according to new national guidelines for physicians, watchful waiting-it-out is recommended—using pain relief and decongestants to manage symptoms and drain fluids, and resorting to antibiotics only if it persists. Which—dare I mention this?—alternative practitioners (who have some pretty effective treatments by the way) have been saying for years.

That's because ear infections will most

often clear up without antibiotic treatment, and because health professionals are seriously worried about the dramatic increase in antibiotic-resistant super bugs, a worry we should all pay attention to. Because not only are drug-resistant bacteria on the rise, they pass their resistant genes on to future generations of bacteria.

Tip number eight: speaking of super bugs, stay away from anti-bacterial soaps. (This is clearly not a seasonal tip; I just thought I'd throw that in while I'm on the topic).

Tip number nine (also on the bug topic): our best defence against the bug-and-virus party season, which happens to coincide with our own party season, is robust health. To achieve that can be tricky in our toxic world for sure, but a good naturopathic doctor can make that more likely than anyone, keeping your endocrine, immune and organ systems balanced and humming, much like regular car maintenance extends the life of that machine.

Tip number ten: be skeptical of nut-cure, alternative extremists who claim nutritional cures for say multiple sclerosis or some sort of one-stop magic-bullet cancer. But be equally skeptical of candy-coated mainstream help offered in glossy drug-store magazines. The nut-cure extremists undermine intelligent and justified skepticism of the motives, safety and efficacy of the conventional pharmaceutical approach to health, but glossy ads undermine our intelligence and ability to choose well. The antidote to nut-case miracle cures is a press that refuses to take the route of least resistance, refuses to turn a blind eye to sometimes hidden truth—a press will give voice, and readers willing to hear, the politically unpopular truths about the capitalist power behind both what ails us and how we try to manage those ailments. (Thanks *Vue*, and thanks to my readers.)

On that note, raise a glass (though not too many), and enjoy the season! ▽



SAYONARA KOFI



Indecisive division

HOCKEY

IN THE BOX

DAVE YOUNG AND TB PLAYER
inthebox@viveweekly.com

Last week's Oiler schedule of divisional matchups started strong with a 3-1 win over Minnesota but quickly disintegrated into a pair of losses to the Colorado Avalanche. The first game looked bad; the Oilers lost 4-1. The second game last Tuesday looked better with a 6-7 loss in a goal-and-penalty-filled barn-burner. It was fun to watch, but it was a loss. Then again, 13 goals were scored. The previous three entire Oiler games saw 14 total goals. And that's kinda fun, isn't it?

NORTHWEST CONVENTION To divide something means to separate it or apportion it or to segment it. But the Oilers' home division—the Northwest—is neither separate nor segmented and it's certainly not apportioned. This is not a division—it's more like a convention. On the morning of the Tuesday Oiler game against Colorado, the Oilers led the division with 36 points and Colorado was way down in the basement with 34 points. By Wednesday morning, the upstart Calgary (blech) Flames led the division with 37 points and the Canucks sunk to the bottom with 35 points. Boy, this playoff race will be fun. DY

A GRAND OIL TIME The mighty Oilers of Edmonton are two wins away from their 1000th NHL win, with an all-time record of 998-804-277-29. As long as it doesn't take them 9 more games to secure the last two wins, the Oil will have done it in the third fewest number of games behind Philadelphia and Montreal. And on a note of extra-specialness, if they win on Thursday in Phoenix, they will get win number 999 in front of old 99. Schweet. TB

HEM-SKORA The goal-fest Tuesday night against Colorado saw a lot of things (too many penalties, great play from Matt Greene, a potential confidence-building goal for Joff Lupul) but the pair of goals

scored by Petr Sykora with sweet feed from Ales Hemsky, back from a shoulder injury, were two of the nicest goals this season. Ryan Smyth is missing because he can't play without a working right thumb. Ethan Moreau is out because he can't play without a good shoulder and Sykora was as good as gone for eight games because he can't play without an Ales Hemsky. Man, those two play well together. DY

BRUNETTE? CALL IT A HAIR TRICK THE Colorado forward Andrew Brunette managed to score his first career hat trick against Edmonton Tuesday night. This came after 657 career games and 15 NHL goals. But Brunette did manage to beat Oiler sniper Petr Sykora in the hat-trick race. Both players entered the league in the 1996-97 season and Sykora has scored 237 career NHL goals since then. But Sykora, who scored a pair in the same game for the Oil, has yet to notch a hat trick but the two-headed beast known as Hem-skora could remedy that some time this season. DY

SPACE FOR RENT Now that Big George Laraque is gone, it looks like Jarret Stoll has taken BG's spot on the Zamboni-boards. The big winger launched himself into the glass to the left of the Colorado net after his first period goal against the Ays on Tuesday. That spot used to be Laraque's little corner of time with Edmonton. Stoll may get into the glass more often, mind you.

MILESTONES To go with the Oilers' 1000th win looming on the horizon, a number of personal milestones have been reached or are very close to being reached this season. We've already seen Ryan Smyth reach his 200th game as head coach, and he'll win his 100th NHL game as a starter later this season. Smyth recorded his 500th career point, while Torres reached his 200th point Tuesday night. Horcoff needs just one more point to reach 200, and Dave Young needs just one more bad pun to make it 100 the season. TB

Saint Nintendo provides Christmas miracle

INFINITE LIVES

side of the digitally sampled jangling provides ambience to the shitty car-being pumped out over the grouchy, packing crowds of holiday shoppers, yet to hear the sound of sleigh-bells in the snow this year—though I heard the meeping grind of graders the night, so I guess at least a few leaky-wheel taxpayers are getting Xmas wishes. My own reaffirmation the possibility for Christmas Miracles the courtesy of jolly ol' Saint Nintendo. Finally got the Wii talking to my wire- internet connection—turns out all my designed white boxes can't auto- matically speak to each other, and my Apple AirPort needed careful introduc- —and was busy downloading Virtual

basically panic-dumping shiploads of the already-failed TurboGrafx 16 console at fire-sale prices.

Stacked in a "please, somebody, any- body, shoplift these things away from us" pyramid right at the front of the store, the consoles were marked at something like 40 bucks each, and I got a 10-dollar cash spiff every time I managed to unload one ("Seriously, this is the *hottest* game sys- tem right now!") on some geriatric sucker who wandered in from the Adult Living complex across the road.

Since the store in Capilano was the slowest in the city, basically a hearing- aid battery depot, I had lots of time to get addicted to *MM*, and in a beautiful example of the Circle of Life, I took the dirty dough I raked in from all five TG16s I'd managed to sell and bought one of my own.

I WAS LIVING AWAY from home for the first time, then, and had just begun making my first discoveries in the world of mari- juana and alcohol abuse; with the intro- duction of a videogame system to the living room of my shared University-area house, the picture was complete. Cheap- ass Imaginus prints on the dingy wall (Behr paint no 3451, "Landlord Beige") above the fourth-hand sofa, skanky skunkweed ash dribbling out of the "bowl" of a makeshift beer-can pipe (I hadn't yet dared buy a bong) onto a pile of uncracked psychology and anthropology textbooks, and me, cal- low and pimple-faced, still a virgin, clutch- ing a controller in the bright winter light (no curtains), occasionally flapping my hands in stoned excitement over my bril- liant successes as a Moon-man warlord.

Sweet holiday memories! Granted, *Mil- itary Madness*—along with every other game ever made—was/is/will be easily available through underground emulation ... but there's something about having it for real, on my television, that makes it more than worth the price of a pint to download. Same for *Super Mario 64*, and the old NES *Ice Hockey*, which some friends and I tripped out on for a while.

And then there's *Golden Axe*, second (well, third, maybe) only to *Black Tiger* in my high-school class-skipping arcade pan- theon. And *Space Harrier*? "Welcome to the Fantasy Zone! Get ready!" Hahaha! I love that shit! Or *Bomberman 93*, the cra- ziest-ass party action game that ever came out of Clinton's first term? And that's just the stuff available on Wii; what about the Xbox Live Arcade, where I picked up ... um ... *Joust*, and ... *Gauntlet* ... *Dig Dug* ...

Oh, holy shit. Did I just spend a hun- dred bucks on archaic gaming? Merry Christmas to me, I guess ... ▼



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Though the name may be Spartan, the cuisine is far from it

CHRISTOPHER THRALL / dish@vuwweekly.com

Greek food makes me happy. Forget that it's part of an exuberant culture that makes a guest feel welcome the moment they walk through the door. Forget that they light things on fire at your table and break their own crockery more enthusiastically than the manic-depressive you just broke up with. If you can, forget ouzo.

It's all about the food. The cold mezethes on the **Spartan Greek Taverna** menu in Sherwood Park included the guaranteed delights of tzatziki, hommus and olives. But the mezethakia (hot, sharable appetizers) is where the palate of an enthusiast can linger blissfully for days. Kefthakia, octopus and dolmathes paint images on the taste buds that must be quenched. I was out to Spartan to quench that need.

With the latest addition to our family, coordinating the convoy to a restaurant takes more planning. It's amazing what is necessary in order to ferry a toddler and an infant from one exurb to another. While on the icy secondary roads northeast of Beaumont, I gave my dad a call and spontaneously invited him to join us.

We pulled up to the cheerful strip mall storefront that faced a blizzard-choked parking lot and hurried in. We were quickly ushered to one of the 15 or so empty tables in the cosy space. The others would easily fill with well-dressed groups by 6:30 on this chilly Friday night.

The atmosphere felt genuine and slightly finer than other Greek restaurants, rather than the over-the-top Greekfest that tars so many. The lattice

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of greenery was still present overhead, but the walls were refreshingly post-industrial, burgundy with corrugated steel wainscoting and wavy Ikea mirrors alternating wall space with the requisite Greek travel posters. An open kitchen perfumed the small space and boisterous Greek pop music shared the air with those luscious aromas.

We were each graced with water and the smiling server who delivered a basket of bread and took our drink orders. She confirmed that the house red was a Greek Grand Reserve, jotted down two glasses (\$5.95) and nodded at milk (\$1) for our daughter. I went for a two-fisted combo of Greek coffee (\$1.95) and Greek tea (\$5.95). She described the coffee—a thimble-full of strong, sedimented brew—and warned me that the tea contained alcohol. I certainly hoped so for six bucks.

THE MENU WAS exactly what I was looking for, though it did offer some steak selections for the less adventurous. I started building combinations of the sharable dishes, all for under \$12. Suddenly, my wife mentioned that she craved moussaka (\$16.95). It was only available as an entrée. Pops decided on a lamb souvlaki (\$18.95)—also an entrée—and I bowed to the prevailing winds. Instead of marvelous Greek tapas, I pounced on the traditional roast lamb dinner (\$19.95). I did sneak in an order of saganaki (\$8.95), the oddly Japanese-sounding



slab of cheese pan-fried in lemon.

We tore into the loaf and my wife gently extracted individual pats of butter from my "treat"-hungry toddler. We caught up with Pops and talked about baby Faye. Our drinks appeared almost immediately, and we each savoured our choices while chatting.

The red wine was a popular choice for my wife and dad, its strongly-flavoured body far too tannic for my liking. They both enjoyed the quick finish. As I waited for the sediment in my coffee to settle, I sipped cautiously at the honey lemon tea, then more enthusiastically.

The Metaza liquor was barely noticeable in the mildly flavoured sweet tea and I polished off half the warm drink in a couple of sips. The coffee wasn't as strong as similar offerings from nations farther east along the Mediterranean, obviously tamed in deference to local tastes. I wasn't very impressed, especially as I downed a mouthful of sediment and washed my palate quickly with the tea.

The kitchen was on a hair trigger

for the upcoming crowd, and very little time passed before I turned to catch our server lighting the saganaki she had baptized with brandy. "The pan is incredibly hot," she warned as she doused the flames with juice from a lemon wedge.

I carefully cut slices from the still sizzling treat and doled them out to my dinner companions' vibrantly-coloured plates. Rather than stringing between pieces, the soft, warm kefalotidi cheese cut cleanly beneath its crisp exterior. Each bite was saltily scrumptious, enriched with that unmistakable sour citrus tang. Damn the calories and savour the moment!

The entrées arrived with similar speed and suddenly our table was packed with food. Part of the happiness of Greek cuisine is that I never leave hungry. My platter was loaded with three generous slabs of tender roast lamb, glistening in a tomato sauce that accented both the green beans and Greek potato. I tore into the meal with gluttonous abandon, carefully avoiding the healthy portion

of Greek salad that would have mostly taken up room in my appetite.

My wife's moussaka was simply garnished, the feature served in its own oval bowl. She also forsook sides in favour of the indefinable sweet flavours of the dish we always refer to as an eggplant meatloaf. For some reason, it also boasted tomato sauce as a base, which was a little stranger with the moussaka. It was with my lamb. My dad quite declined any suggestions to share hearty lamb skewers (except with his ravenous granddaughter) and devoured his meal happily.

We were definitely slowing down the time we reached the ends of our meals, idly picking at morsels that escaped our assaults. Unable to resist, I asked to split a serving of baklava (\$3.95—you can't not order baklava at a Greek restaurant) and a trial run of the galaktoboureko (\$3.95), described as a honey milk pie. Unfortunately, the pie was MIA and we had to settle for a single palm-sized serving of the honeyed wonder packed in phyllo dough. Divided among three adults, it didn't have enough to truly indulge the treat, but it completed the meal on the highest possible note.

We stuffed ourselves ecstatically under \$100 plus tip—a peckish crowd could easily dine for less than \$50. While it wasn't the best Greek cuisine that I have ever enjoyed, Spartan is anything but Spartan in their flavour portions and warm hospitality.

"Beware of Greeks bearing gifts to my ass. If they're holding roasts, lamb and baklava, I'm opening the doors to my fortress and welcoming in the entire armada. ♥

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VUE WEEKLY
FOOD & DRINK
[Image of a food item]

to the locomotion

ON THE RAILS

encountered on terra firma. The lids proved to be a wise idea, as a few pre-lubricated passengers wobbled up to the bar for their first onboard cocktails before the train even started to move.

At 4:30 sharp, the engine began to pull our gravy train slowly through town and out onto the open prairie. The sun was just high enough to expose a huge buck walking gallantly through a snow-covered field; the passengers gaped at its crowning rack.

Meanwhile, the onboard three-piece band struck up a version of "Kansas City" and followed it with a Loretta Lynn classic and a hit by Johnny Cash. Walter, the conductor, collected our tickets and posed for pictures as he wandered through the car chatting amicably with guests. The mood was light and festive, the cocktails were flowing, and we sat back to enjoy the setting sun as it languished on, then plunged below, the icy horizon.

AFTER PULLING INTO Big Valley, the train's passengers flowed into the town. One group headed over to peruse the fudge shop, while my friend and I high-tailed it to the tavern to score a bag of chips and a shot of Sambuca (\$3.50). Having already been on board for over two hours, the small bowl of mixed chips served in

the bar car didn't quite cut it

So, when the train gave its 10-minute warning blast, we eagerly shuttled aboard in anticipation of our dinner. Although the dining car was full to its 40-person capacity, the servers moved effortlessly between tables laid with linen and china. As the railcar slowly made its way along the tracks in what was now complete darkness, our appetizers arrived.

The plate of pasta salad was accented by a line of chilled shrimp and finished with a pool of seafood sauce. Along with a loaf of fresh bread, the appetizer took the edge off our initial hunger. A bowl of institutional tomato soup followed and was well-received despite its unremarkable origin. The third course was salad: lettuce, yellow peppers, grape tomatoes and olives with a ranch dressing.

We had pre-ordered our entrées from a choice of prime rib, Cornish game hen or filet of halibut. My companion took the fish and I was faced with a thick slab of succulent beef

A porter came by with a choice of Sawmill Creek Chardonnay or Turning Leaf Merlot to accompany our meal.

We chose the medium-bodied Californian merlot, which isn't a table wine I would serve at home, but was still an appropriate budget wine to sip alongside the beef.

PREPARED TO MEDIUM doneness, the prime rib was tender and rich. The halibut, however, was overcooked and slightly dry. Both dishes were served with stuffed potatoes and a small pile of overcooked baby carrots. The potato toppings arrived after at least half my potato was finished, but I added some green onions and a few simulated bacon bits to what remained. Those of us with prime rib were on our last bites when the horseradish arrived, and a low grumble of disappointment coursed through the car.

Dessert was raspberry swirl mousse, which was made with lush raspberries that I would imagine were picked locally. Skewers of chocolate-dipped strawberries were also brought out with a tray of mints and an offer of coffee.

We finished up our meal just as the train pulled into Stettler, slowly pass-

ing the festively-lit homes alongside the track. At that point, I felt a true spirit of Christmas: friends, family and the warmth of an old-fashioned trip aboard a classic piece of history

For \$125 each plus tax and tip, the trip isn't so much about the fine dining as it is about the experience. There are certainly better dining opportunities closer to home, but a trip down this technological memory lane is priceless. ▽

Although Alberta Prairie Steam Tours operates weekly from mid-May to the end of October, they follow a reduced schedule during the cold winter months. Their next excursion will be the Valentine's Fine Dining on Feb 17, 2007. Another round trip in March and again in April will conclude their winter season. Tip: dining tours sell out well in advance of their departure date, so book early!

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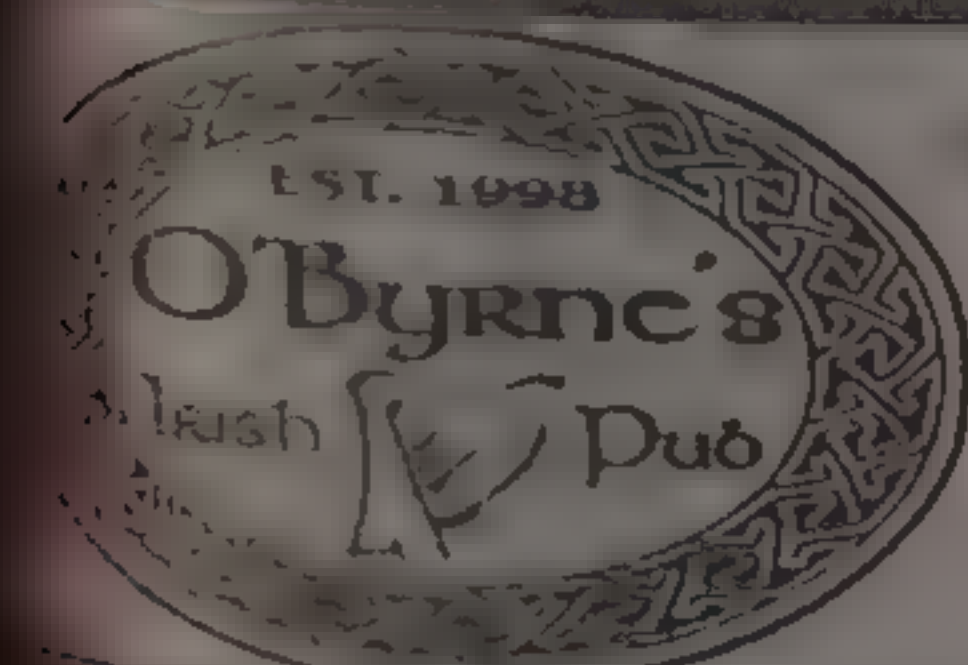
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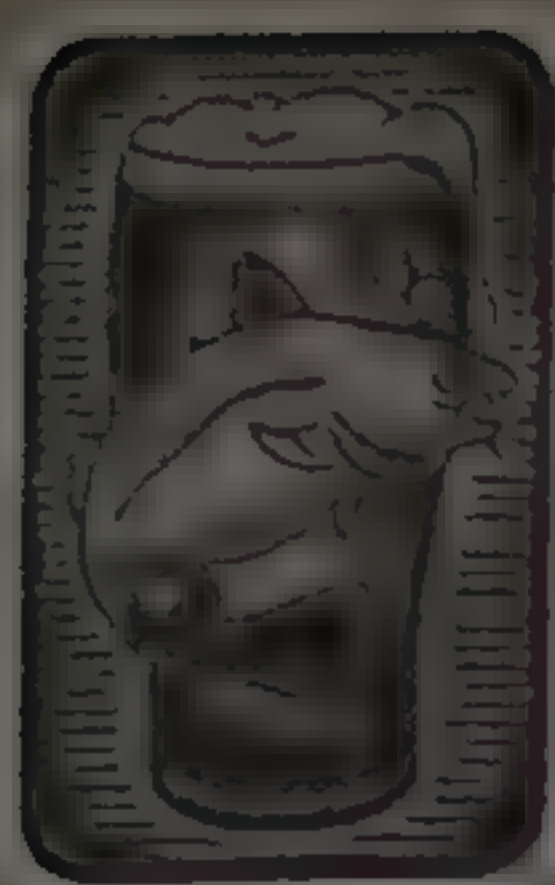
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It's all Mediterranean for Vue food critic

TANIS MCLEOD / tanis@vueweekly.com

In the never-ending quest to maintain my flawless physique (ha!), I read about the benefits of a Mediterranean diet. So when it came time for "the group" to dine out, we decided to give Greek food a try.

Peeking through the large front window of *It's All Greek To Me*, I gazed upon sky-blue walls adorned with white-trimmed mirrors and posters of Greek islands. The low ceiling (also blue) was painted with clouds and shrouded in greenery and vines. I've seen enough photos of Santorini to know I was meant to feel as if I'd walked onto a hot, sunny patio overlooking the bright blue Mediterranean.

A server greeted us and luckily we'd arrived early enough to be seated without reservations. I made note of the outdoor patio as we settled around a low, square table draped with checks in that same blue.

A Mediterranean diet uses fruits, vegetables and spices as its main ingredients and olive oil as its main fat. Extra virgin olive oil increases the absorption of healthy components in the vegetables and fruits and boosts food's antioxidant strength. Alcohol consumption is moderate and paired with food, which protects arteries and improves blood cholesterol. Mediterranean style also includes an abundance of fish, while red meat is served sparingly.

I was beginning to consider myself an expert on the Mediterranean diet, so I set to work searching the menu for veggie options. However, it's difficult to give up being an expert on dessert, and I was immediately drawn to the baklava and ek mek (vanilla custard). But we were trying to eat healthy, so I tore my eyes away and limited myself to entrées that were vegetable-based. I swear I heard my stomach growl with resentment.

Everything sounded exotic, tempting, and I read every description carefully. Kopanisti was roasted pepper and feta dip, while the mades were grape leaves stuffed ground beef and rice. Each item accompanied by either Greek toes (highly recommended in *A Fat Greek Wedding*) or house salad.

FOR AN APPETIZER, we decided on tzatziki and pita (\$6), the mix of yogurt, cucumber and garlic accompanied with pita triangles to dip. The group had pledged to try a variety of foods, so we ordered entrées to share. We had calamari (\$12.95), a large Greek salad with lamb skewer (\$11.95 + \$3.95) and spanakopita (\$9.95) for the

GREEK
MON - FRI LUNCH TO 2 PM, DINNER TO 9 PM
SAT & SUN TO 10 PM
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N.W. EDMONTON

rich spinach. Our drink options included beer, coolers, highball shooters and Greek or Italian wine. Since we were all driving home, we opted for soft drinks (\$2) and a Greek coffee (\$2.50) instead.

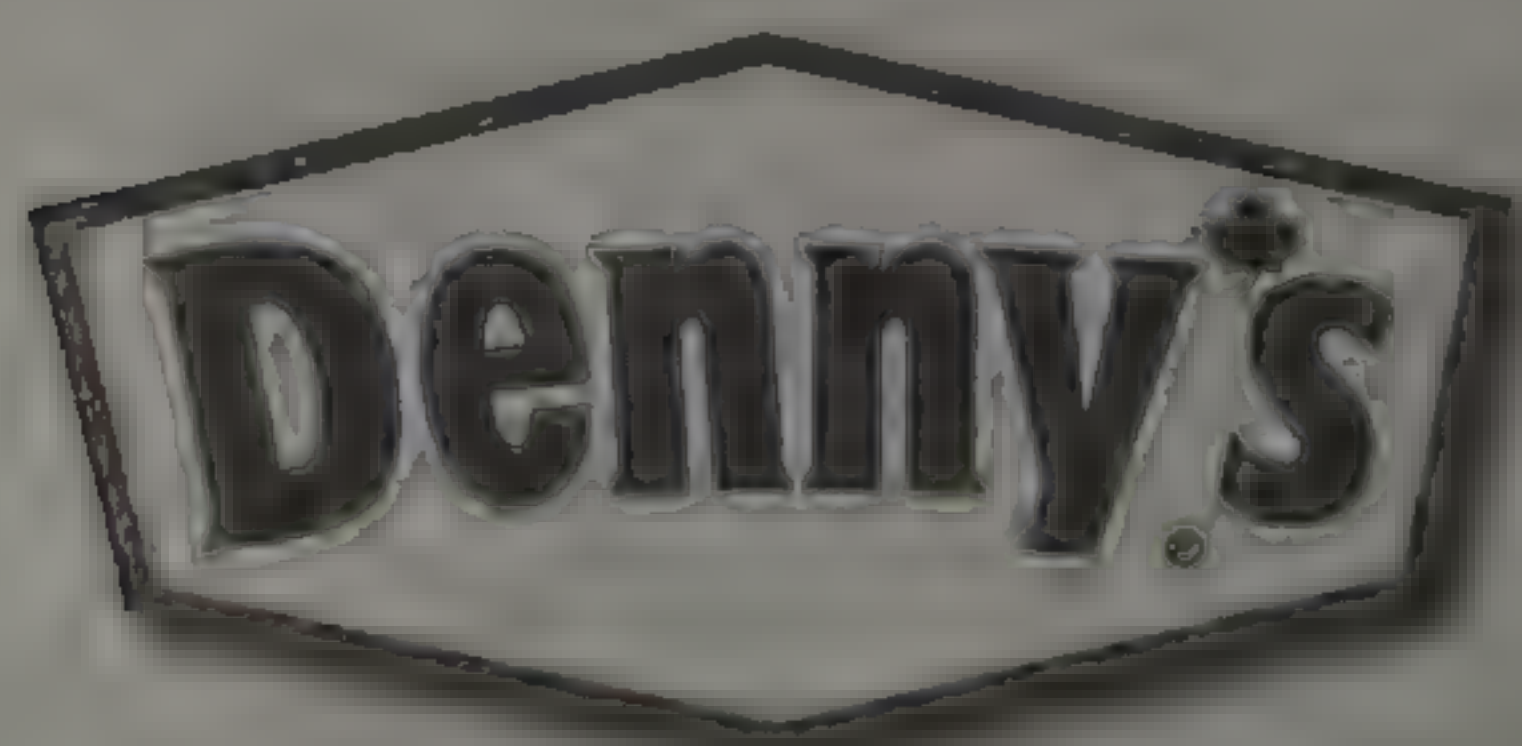
Our tzatziki was served, and in son we dipped fresh, warm pita triangles into zingy dip. As we ate, began to share tales of Greek restaurants in other cities. "Lamb is a barometer of quality in a restaurant," remarked one of my more well-travelled friends, and I began to enjoy the skewer we ordered.

The main courses arrived, and began with the calamari. One server easily provided enough for three hungry friends. After squirting it with lemon and pouring on the tzatziki, each had a taste. Deep-frying is not our calamari the exception to the Mediterranean diet rule — but at least it was seafood. Opinions were mixed.

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FOOD NEWS! DISH WEEKLY

MORE FREE BOOZE! Perhaps we were a little irresponsible in telling you about the free wine tastings at deVine Wines last week. Since we haven't heard not to do it again, we might as well be completely inappropriate! This Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Dec 21 - 23), no less than six wine agents representing vintages from around the world will cruise by to offer free tastes of some of the best wines you'll ever try. Swing by devinewines.ca for a schedule.

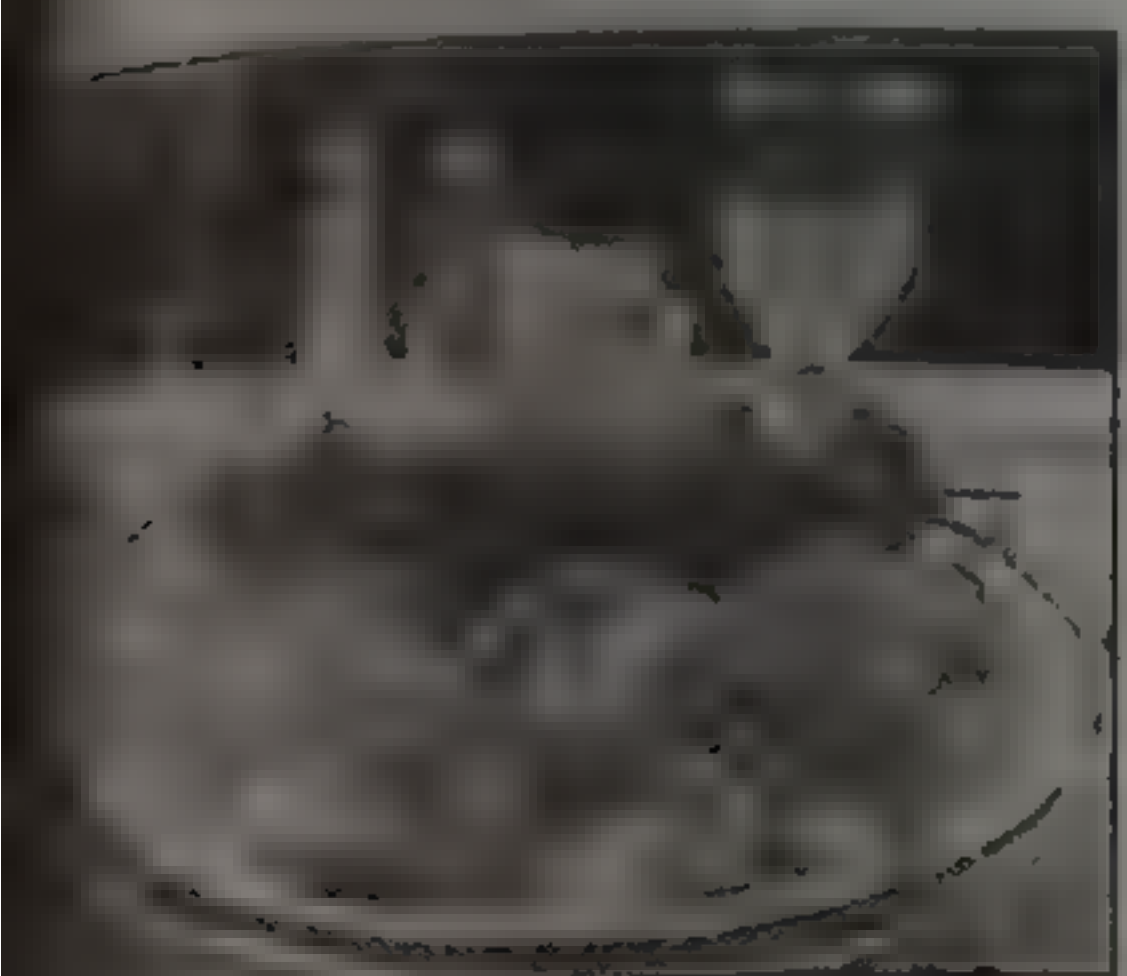
AUCTIONING OFF THE BEST NEW YEAR'S GIG On Dec 31, Hulbert's is hosting "The Auction," an interactive murder mystery,

where you can take part in disco dancing who killed Baroness Audrey von M... and bid on relics from the famed... gist's private collection. Be one of the shady, self-serving characters that... (and double-crossed) paths with Baroness. Tickets are \$85 and include entertainment, appetizers, a gourmet meal and a delectable dessert, coffee, premium champagne and lunch at night. Call 436.1161 to reserve.

4TH & NEW YEAR'S For our readers more refined tastes, celebrate the evening with live music and an all seven-course meal at 4th & Vine. Duo Karen Porkka and Don Ehret will perform from 8 pm onwards. Tickets are \$100 per person, and include favours and champagne at midnight.

Dish Weekly spills the beans on happenings around town. Got an announcement or some unshared gossip? Email dish@vueweekly.com or fax 426.2889.

...diner found the squid's texture
...ly tough and undercooked, while
...her claimed to enjoy its chewy
...discovered that the spinach and
...these in the spanakopita is lay-
...lasagna-style, between the same
...of phyllo pastry used in baklava
...the honey and nuts). My stom-
...immediately forgave me.
...ids flew everywhere as dishes
...passed around the table to be
...ed up. As the bottom crust of the



...panakopita proved tough to cut, I
...andoned my fork and knife and tore
...es off with my hands. I made a
...ental note to check the newspaper
...icle to see if the Mediterranean diet
...olved finger food. The tanginess of
...spinach and cheese mixture com-
...mented the flaky, sweet pastry, and
...ether it did taste a bit like dessert.
...The house salad was made of ice-
...g lettuce with no special nutrition-
...value. However, my momentary
...appointment was forgotten as I bit
...ough the crispy, spiced shell of my
...ever Greek potato. The potato's
...centre held a sultry mixture of
...on and garlic.

Our server explained how the pota-
...s are prepared and then advised,
...n't try making them at home. They

won't be the same; you have to have
a special technique." Ted, the restau-
rant's owner and cook, definitely has
the technique.

The Greek salad we ordered proved
to be huge. We dug in with our forks,
spearing chunks of chilled tomato,
crisp wedges of cucumber and soft
cubes of feta cheese. I tried a small
bite of lamb, which turned out to have
a heavier, fatty taste, but fine in a
small bite. We laughed as we finished
the dish by repeating the order of
tastes. Start with tomato, cucumber
and cheese, then a bite of lamb and
olive. My travelling friend declared
this particular restaurant to be "of
quality." The rest of us agreed.

TO COMPLETE OUR Greek dining expe-
rience, we ordered Marianna's Coffee
(\$5.95) for dessert. At the antique
dresser that served as a workspace,
our server caramelized sugar around
the rims of the glasses. She mixed
Metaxa and orange brandy with two
other liqueurs and coffee, and topped
it off with a swirl of whipped cream.
After savouring the topping and
sugar, I stirred the drink, but the com-
bination of Greek coffee and liqueurs
was too strong and I left the drink
unfinished.

As we paid our tab (\$63.58 includ-
ing tax and tip), we spotted a lean,
older man we took to be Ted, the
maker of those fabulous fries. Ted
welcomed us, and he pointed out to
us the dozens of photographs and
artifacts adorning the walls around
the workspace. Someone produced a
camera phone, and Ted posed for a
photo among his treasures. As we
exchanged friendly goodbyes, we
promised to return to hang our photo
among the others on the walls. ▼

If anyone orders Merlot,
I'm staying!

NICE LEGS

JAMES LYLE
nicelegs@vancouverweekly.com

PLATINUM RESERVE MERLOT
CEDAR CREEK ESTATE WINERY, \$40

a trips to wine country. It gives me
chance to explore new wineries and
either higher-end or less distributed
from established wineries. I experi-
ed both when my wife and I visited
kanagan in the spring of 2004. Inter-
gely, the number of wineries in the
has doubled since I was there less
three years ago.

uring our visit, I felt that four or five
ries produced some excellent wine.
f these, Cedar Creek's offerings are
most available and their Platinum
ne Merlot should not be missed. This
is just coming ready to drink; it should
well for another half dozen years, but
really looking forward to trying it.

in pouring, this strawberry red wine
d a warm odour with both fullness
and power. The power of its nose, with
of black cherry, was by no means

overwhelming but very refreshing. My first
taste came up a bit shallow, but as it pro-
gressed I could sense it opening up. After
a brief break, I returned to the tasting.

The time was just what the wine need-
ed. Flavours of black cherry, spice and a
hint of coffee opened well at the front of
the palate and evolved to the middle.
When it reached the back, the flavours
gave way to a warmth that left only a
slight aftertaste. While the 14.5 per cent
alcohol levels were reasonably high, it
never took over the taste or balance of
the wine. I found this wine matched well
with my rich, red pasta sauce and I think
it would match well against all but the
richest of foods.

Of note to novice drinkers, the Plat-
inum Reserve Merlot is an unfiltered
wine. The wine makers left the last of the
crushed grapes in the wine. This exposes
the vintage to the skins for a longer peri-
od of time and generally results in a more
rounded, finished wine.

To avoid getting a mouthful of crushed
grape skins, either decant the wine
through a filter before serving or leave
about two ounces of wine in the bottle
unpoured—that is, unless you like to
chew while you drink. Enjoy. ▼



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Get back in the saddle at Kicking Horse

LACHLAN MACKINTOSH / lachlan@vueweekly.com

Christmas came early for a friend and me when we were able to get away for a full weekend at **Kicking Horse Resort** above the town of Golden, BC.

Reaching Kicking Horse, now in its seventh ski season of operation, still has the feel of arriving at some snow-bound Shangri-la. The 14 kms of Trans-Canada highway that descend into Golden from the Alberta-side are some of the gnarliest gravel-strewn stretches of winter driving around From Edmonton, getting to Kicking Horse means at least six hours and almost 600 kms of driving. Bring some tunes

We were rocking out to the new Beck album when we missed the right turn that leads to Kicking Horse. But this around-the-block detour took us right past the Golden IGA, where my buddy Doug sharked his Corolla through the heavy side street snow. We grabbed some groceries and got back on the road. There is also a railroad crossing and a slippery single-lane wooden bridge to navigate before we began the 15-minute ascent up to the Kicking Horse Mountain Resort.

Friday night we settled into our comfortable suite on the top floor of the Glacier Lodge. Getting our gear

INSIDE AREA

in from the garage, a middle-aged guy in the elevator asked where we were coming from and then announced, "this mountain is way better than anything you get at Sunshine or Lake Louise." At www.kickinghorseresort.com you can have a look at the latest conditions yourself. Click on "check out the new photos" to see the kind of heavy powder that Kicking Horse has already had this season, adding up to a total mid-mountain snowfall of 492 cm and base of 162 cm.

Little did I know that the longest line I would deal with all weekend would be first thing Saturday morning when I went to get our lift tickets from Guest Services. Two-dozen locals and Snowmax cardholders were all geared up in a switch-backing lobby line-up. The cause for the delay is a new partnership between Kicking Horse and Panorama (about 90 minutes south) called the Snowmax card that allows you to ski or ride either Columbia Valley mountain. Unlike most of these ski hill frequent flyer cards, the Snowmax card puts it all up front, with four free ski days for \$119 (children \$99) at either resort,

and \$15 off lift tickets for the rest of the season.

ONCE OUT IN brilliant blue sky and sunshine, Doug and I opted for a few warm-up runs on the lower mountain, the part of the mountain that you can see from the base of resort. Climbing aboard the Catamount Quad chair, we headed for a cluster of green and blue mid-mountain corduroy. There were literally no line-ups on this chair, and accordingly very few skiers coming back down. In rapid succession, we skied Big Ben, Wolverine, Crow Foot, Beaver Tail, Snow Goose and Gentle Ben.

There is tons of terrain at Kicking Horse with runs criss-crossing, merging and descending from black to blue to green. By my rough calculation, there are 77 black diamond or double-black diamond runs, 17 blue runs and 18 green runs. And, without sounding like too much of a novice, I can tell you there are some very steep pitches on the so-called beginner runs.

A little later on, we were ready for the Golden Eagle Express gondola, which takes 12 minutes to carry its eight-person cargo up 1 200 metres to the Eagle Eye summit at roughly 2 400 metres. In our gondola car were eight guys of various ages, with four boards, and four pairs of skis. A dad

from Okotoks, just outside of Calgary, asked his boys if they were up for the CPR Ridge.

"Are you sure?" he asked them. "That's a pretty tough first run of the year."

His younger son described a particular unnamed run, and said, "come on Dad, it's not that tough. There are no cliffs, no rocks, no trees." No cliffs, no rocks, no trees. This became my mantra for the weekend, while reminding me of a 1980s Van Morrison tune that goes, "No Guru, no method, no teacher / Just you and I and nature," which seemed just right at Kicking Horse.

FROM THE TOP of Eagle's Eye, the views were an absolutely stunning palette of bright blue sky, valleys of evergreen and crisp white peaks in every direction. Doug rode and I skied down into the Crystal Bowl, which was in full shade and gave us the usual fits of flat light.

We jumped on the Stairway to Heaven chair, next to the cosy Heaven's Door Yurt, which takes skiers to the highest point at Kicking Horse: 2 450 metres. As an intermediate skier myself, and with Doug recovering from a back injury that kept him off his board for the past two years, we were both looking for a moderate

way down. The blue run, which is a narrow lane through the trees, is the ridge before offering off points into the powder.

Later, when we exited the lift at the Crystal Bowl section of the mountain by riding the long cat track it's for what seemed like a switchback, Doug was riding one edge for such a long time it was hard on your arches and really a drag for snowboarders.

Back on the lower mountain, we passed the one lone bright yellow snow gun that Mark Dobson, ski manager at Kicking Horse, had been the resort's first official snowmaking. "But we haven't used it yet this year," he confirmed. Such is the bountiful state of Kicking Horse's snow that so far, their new million dollar snow-making machinery is just eye candy.

Sunday morning Doug and I were up earlier to catch the early morning sunlight. The lock-up in the new Glacier Lodge has a forced warm-air system that keeps everyone's boots dry and warm. I loved waking up on the mountain, already having our tickets for the day, pulling on our boots, and walking out to find the existent line-ups and the day ahead of us. ▽

There are Golden views from plush Kicking Horse accommodations

For the second winter in a row, I was lucky enough to check in and check out **Kicking Horse Mountain Resort**, high above Golden, BC. If you can handle the long, winding drive—and resist the urge to stop at Sunshine or Lake Louise—here there is also a ton of snow—Kicking Horse has the best of big, on-mountain resort amenities (hot tubs, saunas and sushi) while still hanging on that community hill charm. Kicking Horse guests might need more lives to visit the nine different types of on-mountain accommodations, which varies from big four-story towers to unique resort homes tucked away in the woods. Last year, my wife and I stayed in the Mountaineer Lodge (\$100 per person, per night). When we pulled the blinds up in the morning it felt like we could reach out and touch the Golden Eagle Gondola. This year an old friend and I checked into the main Glacier Lodge (\$98 per person, per night), which sits like the center chakra of the resort, housing both pleasure and après-ski pain. "This is basically a condo. It's a pretty sweet pad," says my buddy Doug, as we survey our suite on the fifth floor. The well-appointed unit features full-sized Frigidaire appliances throughout, including a stackable washer-dryer tucked into a closet. Plush leather armchairs fit comfortably in with the mocha colour scheme and wood trim moldings. A



ACCOMMODATIONS

second TV and storage shelves in the bedroom closet rounded out our well-equipped weekend base. Doug gave me a hard time for not telling him that the accommodation would include a brand new DVD player and spacious kitchen. "I would have brought DVDs and made a wicked fondue," he said. He also noted that beer was reasonably priced at the General Store, which was easily found just outside our building in what the Kicking Horse folks call "the village." Our unit was on the backside of the lodge, which delivers huge sunrise views of the Columbia Valley. But here's the downside: the early morn-

ing beep, beep, beep, of a Cat clearing the nearby parking lot, and the grinding diesel sound of buses and truck traffic (almost everyone seems to drive a truck in the BC interior) arriv-



ing in the pre-dawn darkness woke us both up more times than you'd want on a resort-priced getaway. Kicking Horse has Holiday and New Year's packages starting at \$425 per

person, as well as Valentines and Family Day Weekend packages in February. Check out kickinghorseresort.com or call 1.866.Ski.Kick for the lowdown. ▽

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GOLBECK / hart@vuweekly.com
If you have a few extra bucks kicking around, you like rubbing shoulders with the stars and looking to help the environment, then you better head for Sun-
e Village on Jan 18 - 21.
s the annual Banff Celebrity
orts Invitational and stars like
ain Williams, Catherine Zeta-Jones,
Ryan and many others head for
slopes in support of Robert F
neddy's Waterkeeper Alliance, a
ip that raises money to patrol and
tect North America's water
ces. Last year alone they raised in
ess of \$1 million at the dinner and
tion held at the Banff Springs

SKI | PAPARAZZI

Hotel. A single dinner ticket will run you \$500, but if you're really loaded you can buy a table for 10 grand and enjoy dinner with 10 friends and a comedian like Dan Aykroyd seated at your table.

If you don't want to spend the big money but you still want a good laugh, just buy a lift ticket and head up the slopes to watch some of these beginners attempt to navigate a race course. They'll be cruising the slopes all weekend and I'm sure they'll keep the ski instructors busy as well. ▼

Mount Washington isn't dreaming of a white Christmas, it's living it

GOLBECK / hart@vuweekly.com
It's been a little turbulent on the West Coast, but staff at Mount Washington on Vancouver Island n't complaining this year. Last year, West Coast rains washed away most of the season, but this season fortunes have changed.
November alone, four metres of white stuff came down and last weekend they got another 80 cm and on consecutive days. Currently a packed base of 2.5 metres, 100 cent of their terrain is open.
Is a bit of a drive but if you are riding to the island for the holi-

SKI | AREA

days, pack your skis and boards. The entertainment scene sounds excellent as well because Vancouver bands Hummer, Two Days Gone and Love Shack will be cranking out the tunes right from Dec 22 through the New Year. If you're into some crazy late night fun, there's a tube ride, which is even open on New Year's Eve. Just to keep things warm and cosy you'll find a bon fire blazing every night as well. ▼

Volunteer for swag or compete for cash at COST

GOLBECK / hart@vuweekly.com
The Canadian Snowboard Federation (CSF) kicked off their annual tour last weekend in Blanc, Québec. Dubbed the Canadian Open Snowboard Tour (COST), it has three more stops down east and it will head west to Canada Olympic Park (Calgary), Mount Norquay (Saskatchewan), Big White (Kelowna) and Whistler (Vancouver), culminating with nationals back at Olympic Park.
The competition includes four disciplines—parallel slalom, parallel giant slalom, halfpipe and a cross—but not all will be held on the same hill on the same week. Usually organizers, volunteers and competitors can only cram two events into a weekend.
For an open tour and all can enter, you must be at least 15 years of age and a member of the CSF. Hel-

SKI | COMPETITION

metes are mandatory. Entry fees are \$50 - \$70 and lift tickets are usually half price for competitors. You are competing for cash and could even end up with \$1000 to buy beer for all your friends. Teams or individuals can enter through the "COST" link on the CSF site, www.csf.ca/cost.

If this interests you but you're not up to competing, the best way to get on board is to volunteer your time for one of the events. Not only do you get to check it out, you get cool prizes and swag in exchange for the time you commit for each event. Just check out the event calendar at www.csf.ca/cost and then email canadianopen@csf.ca and let them know your skills and availability. ▼

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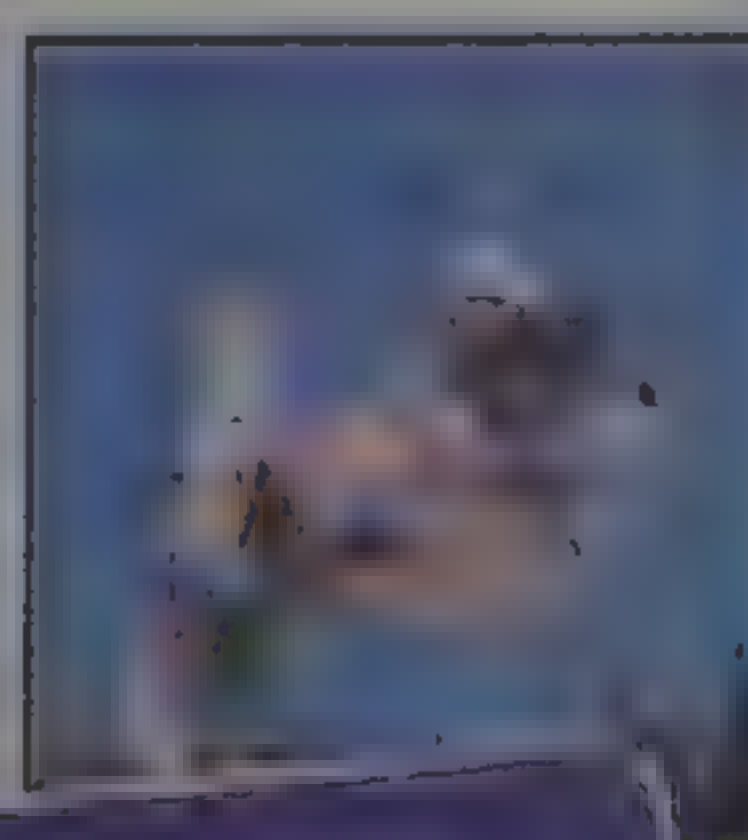
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Eagle Eye serves haute cuisine at great heights

LACHLAN MACKINTOSH / lachlan@vancouverweekly.com

Kicking Horse has the big snow, Kicking Horse has the wild terrain and Kicking Horse has one more deal-maker: the spectacular

mountaintop setting of the **Eagle Eye Restaurant**.

The ambiance at Eagle Eye is classic chalet style: lots of wood, windows galore and a big double-sided

fireplace that keeps the room warm. White linen complements the rustic décor

We arrived at high noon to check on a dinner reservation, but once we

saw the stunning blue sky and brilliant sun that surrounds and suffuses the Eagle Eye at midday, we found ourselves taking a table near the fireplace.

The winter lunch menu is simple and elegant. Six starters range from butternut squash soup to a buffalo carpaccio. Our waitress recommended the chèvre (\$14), which is a delicate goat cheese patty topped with beetroot chutney on a bed of mixed greens. A full and fragrant bulb of garlic sits next to the goat cheese and we devoured its cluster of juicy cloves.

While picking at this starter we nosed and tasted a half-litre of Beringer Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (\$36). This Napa Valley wine was

SKI | FOOD

served colder than you'd expect, but the flavours rounded out the big deep red that paired well with lunch of steak and pasta. The extensive wine list includes five whites, five reds that can be ordered by the glass or half-litre and features several Okanagan wineries

THE LUNCH MENU covers six courses in the \$12 to \$18 range, from wild Coho salmon to the beef burger, which our waitress recommended is what she brings out most often. My old pal

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for the seven-ounce Alberta
steak (\$17), while I ordered
three specials our waitress
ped a penné with pork tender-
loin cream sauce (\$12)
quite a lull between courses,
steak came out more medium
I ordered it (medium-rare),
it into a generous serving
Unfortunately, Doug's steak
better on the menu than it did
quite and my cream sauce
led to the fate of many cream
before it too bland.

temptation got the better of us,
ever, when we looked at the
sert micro-menu. My Chocolate
Tine (\$9) was potent and rich. I
ered an espresso but settled for a
se coffee (\$2) when the waitress
plained that the espresso machine
s "not yet plugged in." This was
e of many euphemisms for what
ght be called the opening weekend
at Kicking Horse. As it turned
the house coffee was full and
ong and matched perfectly, as good
ee always does, with the choco-
e dessert.

Doug ordered the tongue twisting
rt Poached Pear (\$9) and couldn't
ist a small glass of Warriors Port
n. Both desserts were delectable and
ore than enough to share. The only
blem with dessert was, again, that
ook a long time between courses.

The bill was \$104 before tax and
but perhaps more costly were the
hours it took us to get in, and get
of the Eagle Eye. This just might
the best reason to visit the Eagle
for dinner. ▼

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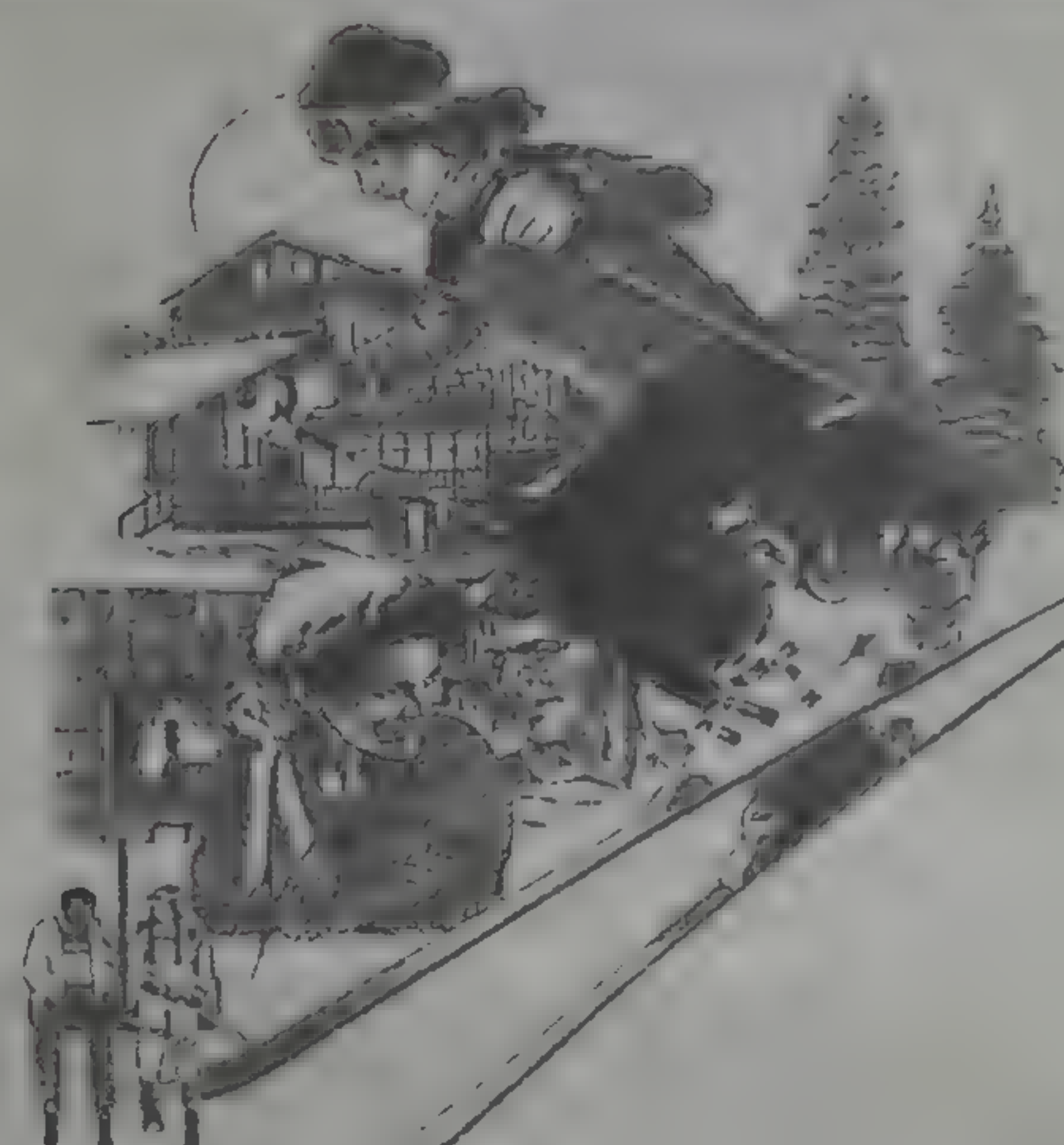
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ALBERTA

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Can. Olympic Park - 75cm base, terrain park and 22ft half pipe are both open
Lake Louise - 90-144cm base, all lifts and 130 runs open
Marmot Basin - 80cm base, 4cm new snow, all lifts and main runs open
Mt. Norquay - 73cm base, 85% of terrain open, night skiing every friday
Nakiska - 35-67cm base, 4 lifts and 18 runs plus terrain park are open
Pass Powderkeg - 60cm base
Sunshine - 131cm base, 12 lifts and 106 runs open
Tawatinaw - 6cm new snow, 24 runs open, good conditions exist

B.C.

Apex - 125cm base, 4 lifts and 67 runs open
Big White - 1cm new snow, 138cm base, 13 lifts and 61 runs open
Fernie - 157cm base, 105 runs and 9 lifts in operation
Fairmont - opening Dec 22nd
Kicking Horse - 156cm base, 2cm new snow, all lifts and 106 runs open
Kimberley - 69-94cm base, 5 lifts and 80 runs open, night skiing Dec 26 - 31st
Mt. Washington - 11cm new snow, 275cm base
Panorama - 2cm new snow, 57-96cm base, 9 lifts and 107 runs open
Powder King - 3cm new snow, 225cm base
Powder Springs - 2cm new snow, 332cm base
Red Mtn - 160cm base, 4 lifts open
Silver Star - 123cm base
Sun Peaks - 112cm base, 0.5cm new snow, 115 run and 10 lifts open
Whistler Blackcomb - 5cm new snow, 220cm base
Whitewater - 220cm base

USA

Big Mtn - 105cm base
Big Sky - 62-95cm base
Crystal Mtn - 75cm base, 13 runs and 3 lifts open
49 Degrees - 137-200cm base, 68 runs
Great Divide Ski Area - 37cm base, 60 runs open
Lookout Pass - 142-212cm base, 100% open
Mt. Spokane - 107-147cm base, 5 lifts and 45 runs
Schweitzer Mtn - 105-160cm base
Silver Mtn - 117-130cm base
Sun Valley - 47cm base

A guide to Edmonton nordic holiday adventures—from end to end

One of the best things about nordic skiing is that you don't have to be an expert to enjoy the sport. While it's pretty easy to pick out the competitive set while you're enjoying the trails—they're usually the ones passing you in tight and technical uniforms—it's just as easy to spot a group of friends who enjoy the company as much as the snow.

So rather than getting technical for my inaugural nordic tip, I have a few suggestions that can help you plan some nordic ski fun with your friends and family.

If your crew already has nordic skis, the impeccably groomed favourite, Goldbar Park, is a good place to start. Take your "let's go skiing" and turn it into an event by planning a night ski and bringing along some après-ski treats. I enjoyed a similar event last week to celebrate a couple of December birthdays. A group of about 10 friends met up at Goldbar Pavilion around 7 pm, and most of us then attempted the "most difficult" trail. The hills on this particular trail provide a bit of extra exercise going up, and giggles going down. There are easy trails, too, and the park is gorgeous at night. We enjoyed hot apple cider and banana bread after the 90-minute ski.

For nordic skiers with friends who would love to try the sport but don't have their own skis, the Strathcona Wilderness Centre might be the perfect

SNOW

THE SKINNY

CHRISTIE SCHULTZ
christie@wueweekly.com

spot. Located just 20 minutes east of Sherwood Park on Baseline Road, the Centre boasts 12-kms of trails for wildlife viewing and cross-country skiing. And, most importantly for the ski-less, they offer rentals on site. Adult rentals are \$11.80 for 3 hours and the adult trail pass is \$3.60; youth rentals are \$9.50 for 3 hours and the youth trail pass is \$1.40. Family trail passes are \$7.75. They are closed on Dec 25 but open for the rest of the holidays from 9 am until 4:30 pm.

The brave and boastful might also be interested in the Edmonton Nordic Club's Edmonton "End to End" ski. The annual holiday event invites anyone with moderate ability to ski along the trails of the River Valley from Goldbar Park to Whitemud Creek. The distance of about 22 kms is not a race, but an opportunity to explore the various trails and views of the River Valley system. In a few places, the route is not obvious, so there's a leader assigned to each group.

Mike Stern of the Edmonton Nordic Club recommends not taking your best skis as there are a few spots where you'll use paved trails, but he also says, "I



enjoy it because it gives me the chance to ski in areas where I don't usually go and you get an entirely different perspective of Edmonton." And besides, learning the trails will give you one more way to enjoy around in winter. Skiing to Whitemud Creek takes about six hours, so bring lunch and maybe more banana bread. For more information on this event, visit www.edmontonnordic.ca.

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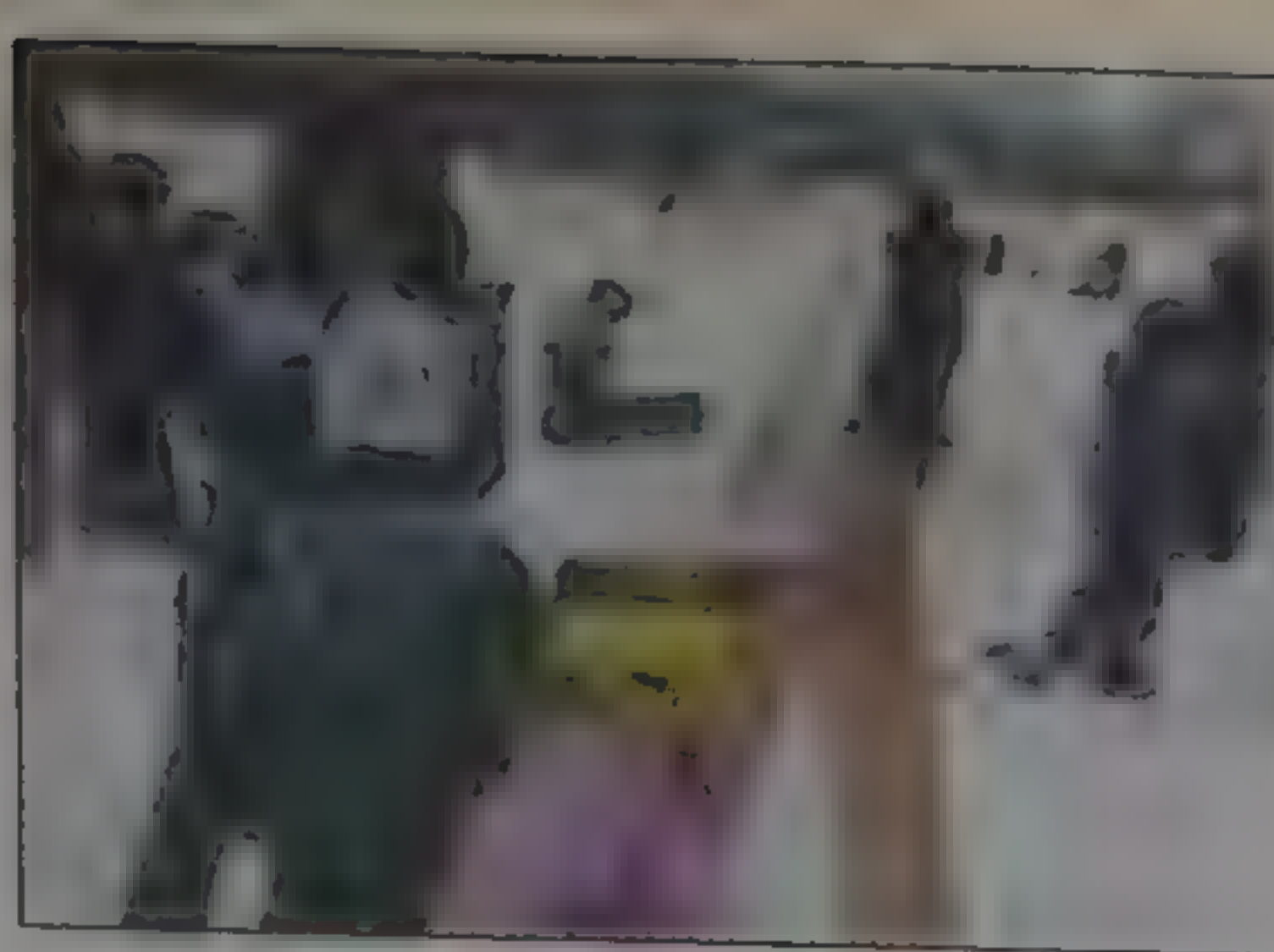
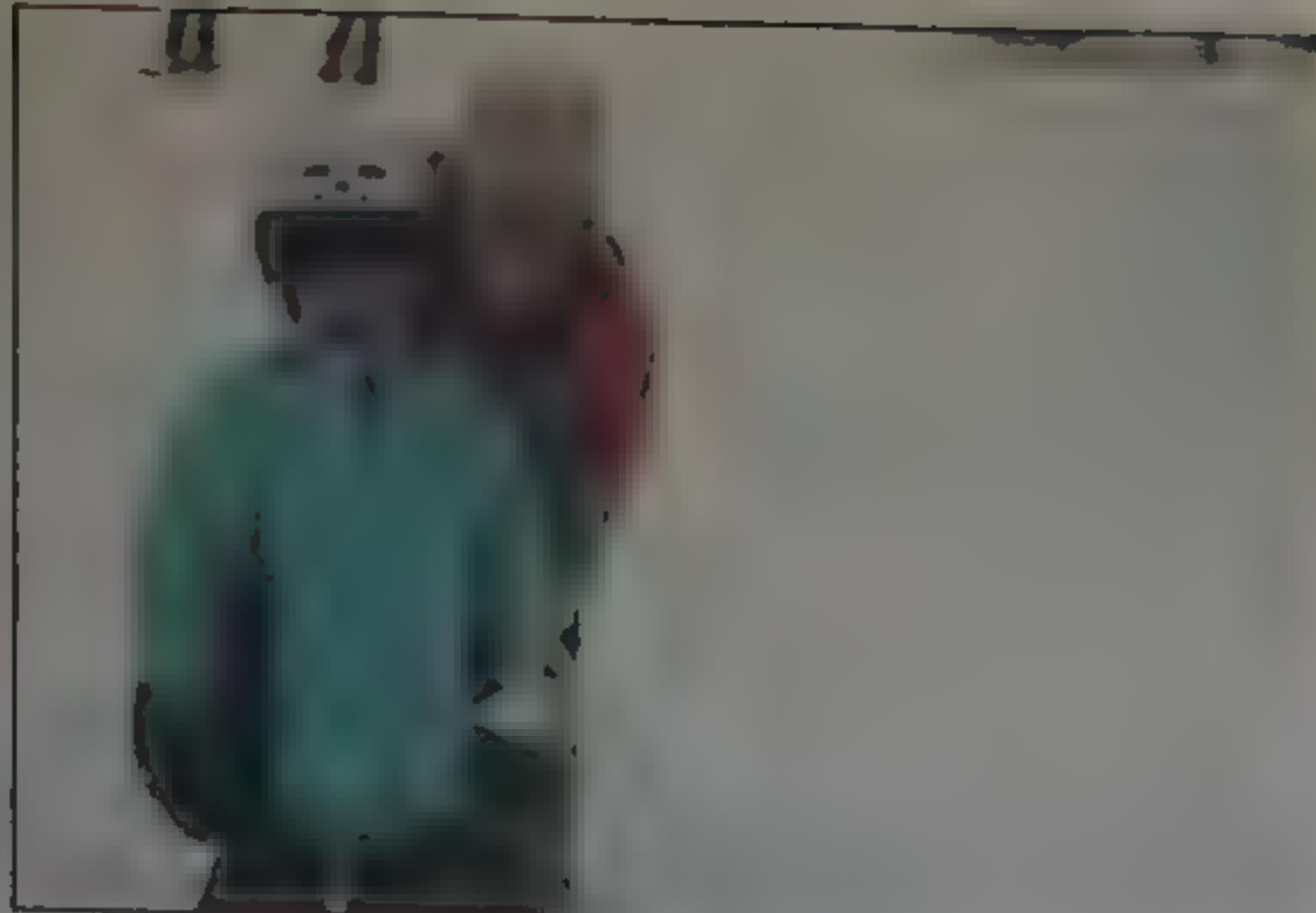
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TAWATINAW VALLEY

alpine & nordic



Once you find it, it's all fun and games, and tubing, at Sunridge

by S.J. O / sonya@vuwweekly.com

Located just outside of Edmonton, the Sunridge ski area is tricky to find, but once you get there you realize it was worth the drive.

My friend and I took the Sherwood Park Freeway, then turned north on 17 Street and drove right past it until there was no more road to follow. We went around in a circle and missed the place again. Finally, we turned back the way we had come, and as we were heading south down 17 Street, we saw a tiny sign, and immediately after, a right turn-off that took us across the railway tracks and into Strathcona Science Park, a provincial park on whose land Sunridge is located.

It had been snowing through the night and all morning, and there should have been a nice fresh layer of the stuff covering the grounds of Sunridge, but my friend and I never got to enjoy it. That's only because we had left in the afternoon and arrived in the morning as we had.

Sunridge owner/manager Harold Meissenborn greeted us upon arrival and was not at all annoyed by our egregious lateness. The rest of the staff had the same easy-going attitude. They were genuinely friendly and did not make fun of us poor bunnies, though it must have been very tempting to do so.

MY FRIEND AND I were introduced to our instructor Amanda and were ready to hit the bunny hill. That's right, the bunny hill—and even that is a challenge. Suffice it to say that we are not very experienced skiers. With Amanda's confident guidance, we soon felt a great improvement in our skiing works so much better when you know how to turn.

After half an hour or so, we were ready to try the next hardest hill. It was a gully surrounded by trees. There was a gentle slope at first, but when I turned the corner, I thought I was heading for the edge of a precipice. It turned out, it was merely the slope becoming steeper. Remembering my instructor's advice, I stopped zigzagging and descended in a straight line. The ride was exhilarating. I managed to get to the bottom without falling, but unfortunately, my friend didn't.

Everything was going well, yet there seemed to be something missing. After a while, I realized it was the lack of most of the skiers and snowboarders were no older than 18. Isn't it reasonable to expect loud screeching, yelling and general obnoxiousness when there are so many kids gathered in one place? Not so. These youngsters were extremely well behaved

AREA

and serious about their sport. Also, the slopes were not overcrowded and there were no line-ups at the lifts. It was just a great atmosphere.

Harold summed it up well, saying: "The big thing that we offer is the space to improve. We give people enough room so they can work up their confidence to get better."

Overall, there are 14 runs offering a wide range of difficulty levels, including a terrain park. It's definitely a good place for family outings or for skiers of any level to brush up on their techniques before they go off to the mountain resorts.

Plus, in comparison to the latter, Sunridge is much more affordable. An adult all-day pass rings in at \$26, and family passes are \$60. Like Edmonton's other local hills, lessons, skier development and family fun are key elements of the Sunridge experience. We'd experienced the former two, with a lesson and some nerve-wracking turns in the gully, and we would soon experience the latter ... on snow tubes.

But first, we returned to the lodge to enjoy some fast food. There was a fair selection ranging from cold sandwiches to onion rings and chicken fingers. Moreover, everything was decently priced. A cheeseburger and some coffee cost me no more than \$7, a trifling sum compared to other ski resorts, which will charge you outrageously just because they can. Not only that, but the coffee was hot and strong—what more could you ask?

AFTER CHATTING FOR an hour or so, we were outside again. We were about to experience snow-tubing for the first time in our lives. The tubes look like round little rubber boats. All you have to do is climb aboard and let your tube slide down one of the three chutes. It's an experience similar to tobogganing as you zoom through the spray of snowflakes, spinning and lifting off into the air as you go over a bump.

"It's almost like flying," my friend commented.

We were both pretty thrilled after our first run, and the lift attendant must have been amused to see a couple of 23-year-olds so excited and eager to get back to the top and go down again.

"Okay," I said, "next time, let's take the third chute."

"No, I'll take the first and you take the third," my friend suggested, "and we'll see who makes it down first."

The attendant attached my tube to the tow-cable, and I sat back as I was

gently pulled upwards, the view of the river and the forested bank beyond slowly revealing itself as I ascended.

While I was photographing a father-and-daughter team who had attached their tubes together and were about to go sliding down, the mother, who stood by watching, quipped, "Underneath the picture, you have to put 'maniacs'."

"Have you been out here all day?" I

asked.

"Yep," she replied cheerfully, "There's a lot of hot chocolate in this body."

We also met a number of kids who were part of a birthday party, feasting on stacks of Pringles as they sat around an upside-down tube that they were using as a table. This made us hungry, but there was more tubing to be done, and we continued until the

tubing park's closing time at 4:30 pm.

One of the best things we got out of the experience was the sensation of youthful carefree living. There is the thrill of the descent and then the quiet musing—or just gazing up at the sky—as you are slowly lifted to the top of the hill. But it was the friendliness and outgoing nature of the people around us (both the staff and the other skiers) that made it a completely satisfying day. ♥



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Local artists and writers bound together in *Notebook*

by DAVID BERRY / david@vueweekly.com

Steven Teeuwsen has got some advice for anyone who's got a long-term project they can't find the time to work on: go to Taiwan and teach English.

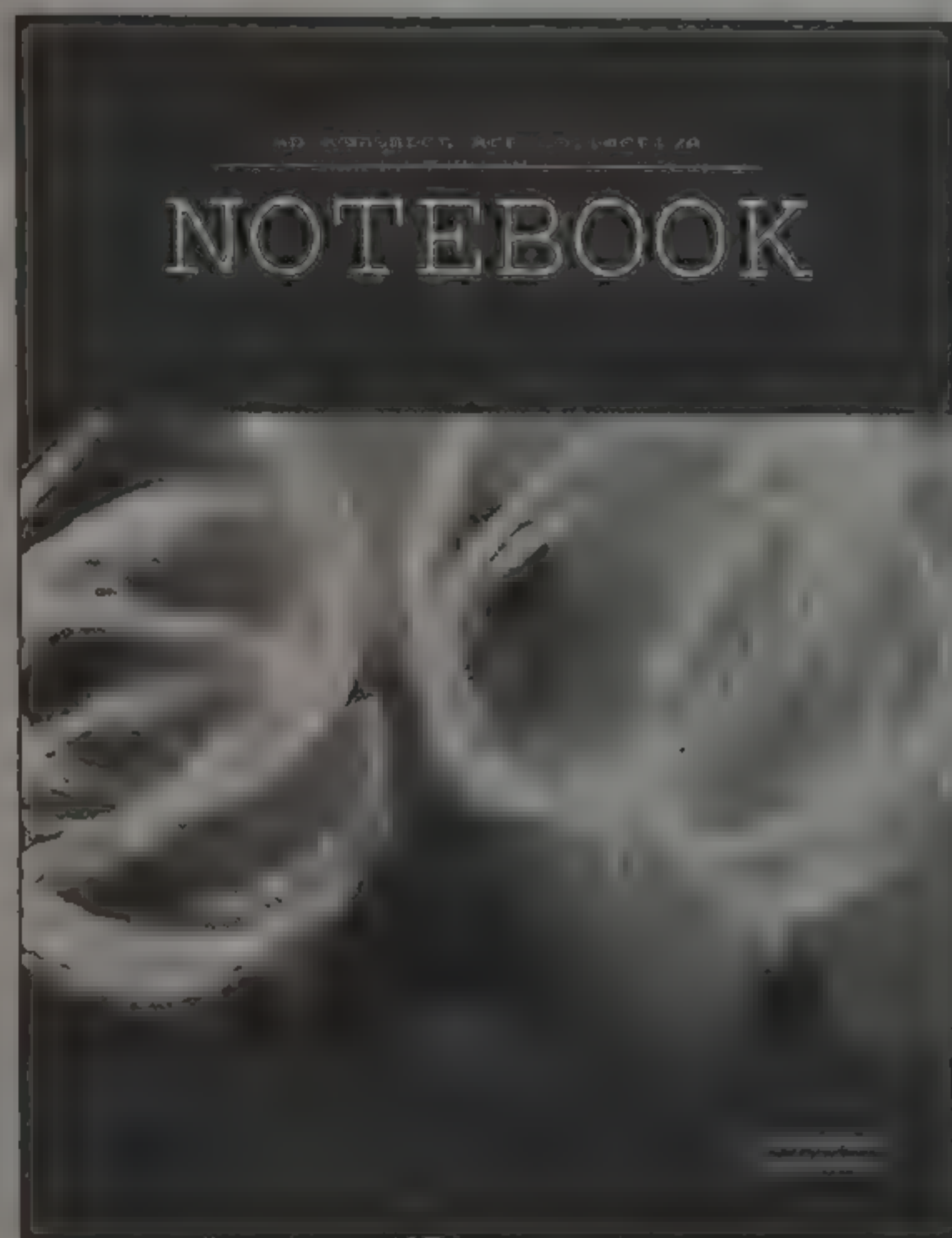
Well, there's the cost to get down there, but once you're there, you don't have to worry about money, and all you have is free time," explains Teeuwsen over a tea at a University Tee shop. "I sort of got the idea for the magazine from the fact there were three or four other people who were working on starting up their own magazines while I was there."

The magazine Teeuwsen is referring to is *Notebook*, his new glossy that has taken on the noble goal of providing Edmonton's artistic community with a quarterly outlet for their work. A photographer by trade, Teeuwsen aims to bring together everything from your more classic visual arts to graffiti, poetry and short stories, with the goal of not only increasing the visibility within the arts community, but making it easier for the average Edmontonian to find out what's going on in the city these days.

"I want it to be basically like a gallery show in print form," Teeuwsen explains, pointing to magazines like *Focus*, a photography feature that offers a small profile of each artist, but mainly centres on showing off the work of its contributors.

Not everyone can always make it out to see a show—or put together a show, for that matter—but this will show people what Edmontonians are doing, and help some of those artists get their name and work a little better known.

OUGH TEEUWSEN has been away from the art scene a few years—he's spent three of the last four teaching English and touring Southeast Asia—he admits he's a little surprised that *Notebook* is the first time anyone has tried an independent magazine devoted solely to publishing artists' work in Edmonton; though there are things like *fifty3*, *Latitude 53's* quarterly magazine, they tend to focus on criticism and artist's interpretation, rather than showcasing work.



PREVIEW

FRI, DEC 22 (8 PM)
NOTEBOOK MAGAZINE LAUNCH PARTY
FEATURING POETRY OPEN MIC, HECTOR FECTOR, CHRISTIAN HANSEN, AA SOUND SYSTEM, RADIOVACANA, VELVET UNDERGROUND
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"It certainly seems like the scene is sort of ripe for it," says Teeuwsen. "It seems like Edmonton's starting to get away from a bit of that blue collar image more, and certainly we're big enough to warrant something like this."

As for the launch party, which will feature a poetry open mic event before a quartet of bands take the revelry into the night, Teeuwsen hopes it will help kick off a little bit of the sense of community he's hoping for—for artists and himself.

"There's about 20 artists in the first issue, and I've met—let's see," says Teeuwsen, looking through the contributor's list. "Yeah, I've met three of them face to face, so if nothing else, it'll be a chance for me to actually see the people who are in the magazine." ▼

A Ragged Pen gives thanks for the memories

BOOKS | **HOPSCOTCH**
JOSEF BRAUN
hopscotch@vueweekly.com

Years ago I came across this photograph of myself at, I'm guessing, the age of six. I'm standing before the bathroom door, there's chocolate smeared across my mouth, I'm wearing a Superman T-shirt, arms raised up in a tuning fork pose to flaunt my spindly biceps, my facial expression utterly deadpan.

I thought it was terrific, and brought it over to this large house by the Bow River where I drank a lot of good wine, ate several pot brownies, played the drums with a flamboyant lack of skill and later doubled over and passed out in the afternoon heat. When I finally made my way back home it was without the photo, which I believe found its way onto the riverside house's refrigerator and from there journeyed god knows where, the tenants having moved out long ago.

An interesting thing happened. When I first found the photo it stirred lost childhood memories; now that I've lost the photo, I struggle not to remember the memories it prompted, but to remember the photo itself. Was it a Superman T-shirt or a Smurf T-shirt? Was that chocolate on my face or just dirt? And as I write this, the memory's direction shifts yet again. I'm aware of this every time I attempt to jot down my dreams: by writing as a method of remembering, I involuntarily start developing a narrative, a sense of causal order that's probably entirely artificial.

This tension between writing and remembering, how one process compromises the other, is one of those topics undercutting all literature. As Susan Sontag wrote, "All writing is a species of remembering." This quote is cited by Robert Finley in his introduction to *A Ragged Pen: Essays on Poetry and Memory* (Gaspereau Press, \$22.95), a highly engaging little volume of pieces by five Canadian poet/essayists, each addressing memory in their distinct and reflexive manner.

Finley himself attempts to wring facts from an old photo but confirms his suspicion that such artifacts aren't windows to the past, but rather opaque. I think what Finley is getting at is that photos remain closed to us until we gain entrance through a leap of imagination.

Anne Simpson writes in her essay, "Imagination draws on memory, yet goes further, since it is the work of making." This brushes against the essence of poetic licence.

Aislinn Hunter, in her essay, imagines having a

picnic with Jorge Luis Borges, the late Argentine author of several of the richest investigations into the nature of memory we have. Hunter's picnic with Borges springs from a memory of another, supposedly real picnic, yet, she wonders, "Might my picnic with Borges ... exist more completely ... because I imagined it more fully?" "Language is an act of reconstruction," she writes, yet alludes to the notion that language is also pure construction—with enough nurturing, perhaps Hunter will genuinely remember her picnic with Borges and install it into her identity, the honeycomb through which every memory bee circulates and permanently alters

SUCH REVERIES ARE usually of direct consequence only to the individual exploring or expressing their memory. But poetry, poetry that goes out and lives in the world, can house much more than individual expression. Finley is the first to raise the question of

"History, we are told, is written by the winners. Lyric, I believe, is written by the losers."

the writer's responsibility to history, suggesting that receptiveness is crucial. The writer's responsibility to history, he writes, is "to find a language that listens." However, the truth of this declaration is softened somewhat by the fact that any writing of any kind needs to "listen" if it's to resonate, to breathe—in short, to be any good.

In *A Ragged Pen's* final essay, Jan Zwicky returns to some of the questions Finley raises at the book's start, bringing them full circle, getting specific about the responsibilities of different sorts of writing for different sorts of memory-burdened subjects. On the difference between history and lyric she writes, "History, we are told, is written by the winners. Lyric, I believe, is written by the losers." History is conventionally written as narrative, and narrative, Zwicky suggests, perhaps arrogantly, conveys an explanation for events by fitting them into a causal order.

So when is the narrative approach inappropriate? Zwicky points to narrative's inadequacy in addressing atrocity: "Moral treatment of atrocity requires a lyric medium, witness rather than explanation."

Thus we find ourselves at the end of *A Ragged Pen* confirming the necessity of poetry in a world so overwhelmingly indifferent to it: poetry is a way of transcending the banality or distancing effect of the historical narrative. Lyric honours atrocious events, ensuring that the trauma of the past will fertilize the most vital memories of the future. ▼

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TOP 10 RINGTONES

- 1) Smack That feat. Eminem
Akon
- 2) Lips of an Angel
Hinder
- 3) Irreplaceable
Beyonce
- 4) You Don't Know (Eminem verse)
Eminem
- 5) I Wanna love you
Akon
- 6) Sexy Back
Justin Timberlake
- 7) My Love
Justin Timberlake
- 8) Maneater
Nelly Furtado
- 9) Money Maker feat. Pharrell
(Ludacris verse)
Ludacris
- 10) Enter Sandman (Chorus)
Metallica

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THIS WEEK'S
FEATURE
ARTIST: **FAT JOE**

Blanchet is head over heels in life and acting

DAVID BERRY / david@vnewweekly.com

I had never skied before going to Lake Louise, but I had watched skiing on TV, so I knew how I was supposed to look," explains Shannon Blanchet, sitting regally in an upholstered easy chair in a local café.

Her voice is far more casual than her posture; she explains, full of the self-shaming laughter that can only come from misbegotten youth, how it was she spent a year working in Lake Louise without skiing there.

"I did really well on the bunny hill, so my friends took me to the top of the hill, where we happened to meet two guys from the junior national ski team. Right there, my ego just took over—I was going to impress them. I was flying down the family run, and my friend—who was also teaching me how to ski—warned me to slow down. I was just like 'Whatever,' and took off, but then I hit some ice. Right then, I realized that I had never skied before. My skis crossed and I went flying. I landed on my stomach facing up the hill, and I could just see the blood in the snow. I broke my nose, and I also tore my hamstring, and that was the last time I skied at Lake Louise."

The odds of Blanchet crashing might be slim, but you get a healthy sense of the same headstrong exuberance that left her face down in the snow when the young Edmonton

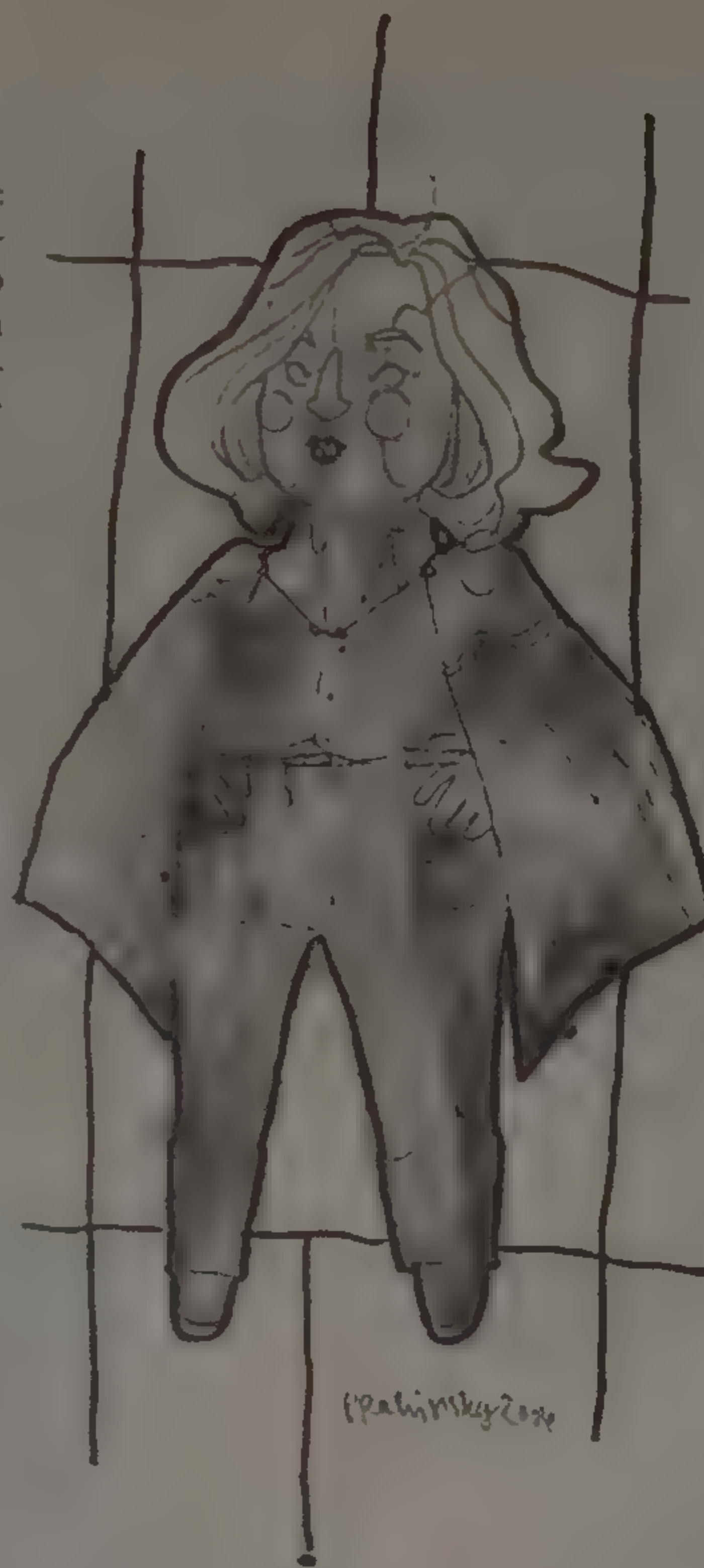
THEATRE PROFILE

actress starts talking about her career: there's a kind of wide-eyed excitement to the way Blanchet seems to approach her life, mixed in with a sharp pride that keeps it focused—and, Blanchet admits, might get her into trouble from time to time.

"I like to think that I realize when I've done something I sort of think I shouldn't have a lot sooner after I've done it than I used to," Blanchet explains, her smile stretching the edges of her face. "I hope that one day I can start realizing that before I actually do the thing that I regret doing, you know, as opposed to, you know, 'Oh, shoot!' a few seconds after, but at least it's getting closer."

THERE CAN'T BE too much Blanchet regrets of late. One of the standouts in a bumper crop of graduates from the U of A's BFA program, her most recent turn was purely becoming the title role in Teatro la Quindicina's revival of *Evelyn Strange*, though she's also had some very memorable turns at Shakespeare in the Park (Rosaline in 2005's *Love's Labour's Lost*) and the Fringe, where she does her work with Pony Productions.

Life as a young actor, though, is often more pit than peach, something



Blanchet is coming to appreciate, albeit grudgingly.

"I loved doing the BFA, but I forgot somewhere in there that eventually you come out the other side and everything is so different from what you thought it was going to be—I don't know what I expected, but, actually, but it's different," explains, her smile giving way to a quiet solemnity. "I think I should learn to chill out about it and realize where I am, and just accept that much work it is."

Taking a relaxed view, Blanchet doesn't initially strike as being Blanchet's style, though she is a degree more world-wise than her beliefs. It seems as though she's learned something from time in the past, and has come to a certain mature understanding with herself, even if that doesn't quite explain the world just yet.

"I'd like to think you have to earn the title of 'artist,' and I like to think I'm on the path to earning that title, but I think part of that is not knowing what exactly it's going to be, trying to figure it out as you're going. But unless you start exploring, you never find out; you never really arrive. I don't start travelling," she explains, letting the thought linger.

A smile once again bursts across her face as she rolls her eyes. Her head follows with them, and that's so pretentious. But oh well.



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Where does artistic freedom end and cultural appropriation begin?

MATEJKA / agniezka@vancouverweekly.com
The visual arts story I am about to write is the most difficult I have ever covered, one that has given me some sleepless nights. The reason for my anxiety is that the issues I am to discuss are confoundingly

On the one hand is an artist's right of expression, a right that society is founded upon and that I can appreciate on a personal level. (My parents were in a communist system where they suffered for their convictions.) On the other hand is another sacred value, one that allows all humans to live harmoniously in a multicultural society with sensitivity to the religious sensibilities of other cultures. In the story I am about to write these two values have become inextricably and painfully entangled.

Let me begin at the beginning. There is much public controversy over the new blocking wall of the new addition to the Shaw Conference Centre. Local sculptor Ryan McCourt's steel works collectively titled *Will and Representation* are selected to adorn this section of Jasper Avenue. These sculptures have been inspired by Hindu art. In McCourt's words, "ranks of the great sculptural achievements of human culture."

The specific image that McCourt refers to is one of the most common and highly venerated symbolic representations of God in Hinduism: Ganesha, or the Remover of Obstacles. For devout Hindus, nothing is accomplished without the blessings of the deity. And, as with other religious art, every detail of the representation has profound symbolic significance, or "hidden" messages. For example the large ears of Ganesha represent the ability to listen and understand, the axe represents the cutting of bonds of attachment, the elephant head represents the ability to travel the spiritual path to the goal, the small eyes represent the ability to concentrate. In the thousands of years of the deity's existence, one of the oldest living religions has evolved, every aspect of Ganesha has acquired a specific meaning that spins a spiritual tale.

TO THE COMPLEXITY of the symbolism, the apparent faithfulness in Ryan McCourt's sculptures and clearly Hindu inspiration, I wanted to get some feedback on the works from the richest source of knowledge. I contacted the president of the Cultural Society of Alberta, Dr. Sukhdev Agnihotri, a former president of the society (he said that his comments are not his personal views, not representative of the society) and a resident priest of the temple. We braved the cold gusts and that blew down the River quite literally making my pen



IDEAS

BY RYAN MCCOURT
WILL AND REPRESENTATION
SHAW CONFERENCE CENTRE HALL D ADDITION
(JASPER AVENUE NEAR 97TH STREET)

freeze in mid-page and talked animatedly about the sculptures.

"Hindu iconography is based on rules as well as traditional values," said Agnihotri as he examined one of the steel works and continued to elucidate how rules that religious statues follow are designed in the context of a spiritual purpose.

To take the sculpture out of the context of the spiritual purpose he views as problematic in itself. But in this instance, a number of details have been altered as well. For instance the seated posture of Ganesha is always devout, with legs crossed, while in the steel work the deity is seated on a stool with his legs spread.

"That is no way to represent Ganesha. When you are representing a God you should be a little more careful," the priest exclaimed with hurt in his voice. "God is not represented as sitting nude. It's more a mockery. He is sitting nude and that's hurtful."

At that point Agnihotri interjected to explain how important Ganesha is in Hindu traditions. "It's the beginning of our life, we don't consider ourselves in existence without Ganesha," he said. "Whatever we begin we do a Ganesha pooja [ritual] first." Such spiritual importance of Ganesha makes alterations deeply problematic. "How the artist did it is a big wrong. It is no way to represent Ganesha," he continued. "They hurt feelings, they carry the wrong message of what Hinduism is all about," adds the priest. "These things should not be encouraged by the city, or any level of government. We feel that this is the wrong message; people who don't know Hinduism will laugh at it. Any level of

government should not encourage artists like that to touch any people's religion whether it's Hindu, or Muslim, or Christian. They should leave it alone," concludes Agnihotri while the priest adds quietly: "He [the artist] should be more sensitive."

AFTER CONVERSING WITH the artist over email, it is very clear to me that he did not intend any offence. He admires Hindu art and Hindu philosophy. Yet, a fundamental cultural misunderstanding remains. For McCourt the focus of the sculptures is primarily aesthetic. He refers to himself as a "devout atheist" with the spiritual aspects of the symbolism playing a relevant but secondary role. "... the symbolic meaning of the iconography does lend a secondary level of interest to the works, supplementing their primary effect as works of art," he explains. But such secular interpretations of religious art are a major deviation from the original context and purpose intended by the cultures that developed spiritual art forms over thousands of years.

That is why appropriation of sacred imagery for secular purposes is inevitably hurtful and contentious. Particularly in Canada where we have a rich and harmonious multicultural society and where Native Americans have already clearly voiced opposition to the misappropriation of their sacred imagery into popular culture, artists and selections committees need to be sensitive to the concerns of minorities.

Does that mean that artists like McCourt can't ever be inspired by the rich lore of world religions or use religious art as the starting point of their work? That question has kept me awake at night, with no concluding epiphany in sight. The final balance between freedom of expression and respect for the faith of others is like treading a razor's edge with each side being irreconcilably in the right. ♥

It's a 'Nasty case of Christmas spirit

DIE-NASTY

DIRTY LAUNDRY

JOEL SEMCHUK
dirtylaundry@vancouverweekly.com

Ty Knotley is offering reindeer burgers at Burger Baron; organist Jean Hammond promises more rock 'n' roll ... and a nice night for Dr Bueno Excellente. It's a very white Christmas for Bueno, and, speaking of which, Dwayne Minsky's advice to young hockey players is "Don't do drugs that aren't yours."

Dr Excellente was closing up when Cheryl Oogachakka appeared, in tears and purple platform pumps; her husband's been sleeping all over the house, and Cheryl's only Christmas wish is for him to sleep with her. Her attempt to get this wish only led to a distant Hogie's voice telling her that his game's faltering, he's wondering if she loves him and he's thinking of moving to Vancouver to act ... so unfortunately, Cheryl didn't get her wish.

Poor Ty Notley, though. At one point he's sharing a beer with Doris Excellente and singing along with Philip, his peregrine falcon, then he's visited by the ghost of Christmas future who kicks him in the balls and walks away. Then, Doris Excellente finally tells him about her VD's.

And what a time for Minsky! Television star Armand Roca appeared and explained to Minsky that he had a movie role and had to "get inside" Minsky—

which he did, slowly and painfully. And, once inside, he informed Minsky that his lead role as Boner on the cop show *Boner In-Hand* was cancelled and that, actually, there was no movie role. Roca wanted to jump from the High Level, but Minsky saved Roca's life by teaching him hockey ... how sad Roca died removing a Die-Hards jersey while getting into bed with Jamie Capilano

So with Roca's body in Laurel's bar, the true meaning of Christmas was looked for by all: Dr Excellente noticed that Roca got what he wanted for Christmas; Doris said "Whether you're dead or alive ... What-ever!"; and Ty decided to bury Roca at centre ice for good luck.

So from the Die-Hards, Merry Christmas, and in the words of Armand Roca as Lieutenant Boner, "Keep on Boning!" ♥

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4. Joanna Newsom – Ys (drag city)
5. The Be Good Tanyas – Hello Love (nettwerk)
6. Yusuf - Another Cup (atlantic)
7. AA Soundsystem – Laissez Faire (saved by radio)
8. Midlake – The Trials Of Van Occupanther (worlds fair)
9. The Decemberists – The Crane Wife (capitol)
10. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris – All The Roadrunning (mercury)
11. TV On The Radio – Return To Cookie Mountain (interscope)
12. Beck – The Information (interscope)
13. Mastadon – Blood Mountain (relapse)
14. Chad VanGaalén – Skelliconnection (flemish eye)
15. Greg Keelor – Aphrodite Rose (warner)
16. Jim Cuddy – The Light That Guides You Home (warner)
17. The Cape May – Glass Mountain Roads (flemisheye)
18. Isis – The Absence Of Truth (ipccac)
19. Various – Sorrow Bound: Hanks Williams Re-Examined (ruby moon)
20. Ratatat – Classics (xl)
21. Red Ram – Stars Ablaze (red ram)
22. Blackie And The Rodeo Kings – Lets Frolic (true north)
23. Fractal Pattern – Absent From But Entirely Within The Landscape (fp rec)
24. Madeleine Peyroux – Half The Pefect World (rounder)
25. And One – Bodypop (metropolis)
26. James Hunter – People Gonna Talk (rounder)
27. The McDades – Bloom (free radio)
28. Damien Rice – 9 (warner)
29. Shout Out Out Out Out – Not Saying Just Saying (six shooter)
30. Wendy McNeill – The Wonder Show (determine)

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GALLERIES/MUSEUMS

AGNES BUGERA GALLERY 12310 Jasper Ave (482-2854) • **SMALL WORKS—SHORTBREAD AND SHERRY:** Small artworks by gallery artists; until Dec. 23

ALBERTA CRAFT COUNCIL GALLERY 1000 (488-6611) • Open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm (closed all hols) • **Feature Gallery:** ALL ABOUT ALBERTA: Jan. 6-Mar. 31, opening reception: Sat, Jan. 13 (2-4pm) • **Discovery Gallery:** 2006 ALBERTA CRAFT AWARD RECIPIENTS' EXHIBITION: Artworks by the five recipients of the 2006 Alberta Craft Awards, Jan. 6-Feb. 17, opening reception Jan. 13 (2-4pm)

ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA 2 Sir Winston Churchill Sq (422-6223) • Open Tue Wed Fri 10 30am-8pm; Thu 10 30am-5pm; Sat-Sun 11am-5pm • **FREE FOR ALL:** As we count down to the last days in the current gallery building we want to go out with a festive bang. Free For All is a celebration of Edmonton artistic creativity and a chance for everyone to show-off at the AGA. We invite professional artists, amateur artists, emerging artists, has-been artists, nascent artists, Sunday artists, their mothers and everyone to exhibit at one of Canada's most important venues for contemporary art; until Dec. 31 • **CONTEMPORARY INUIT ART:** Film/video/drawing, **ISUMA TO HAVE AN IDEA:** presents a survey exhibition of contemporary Inuit film and video by Igloodik Isuma Productions, Canada's first Inuit independent film production company, **ASHOONA THIRD WAVE** features new work by Shuvina Ashoona, Siassie Kenneally and Annie Pootoogook. *Ashoona Third Wave* represents a tradition of art-making that spans three generations, until Feb. 19, 2007 • **FAR AND WIDE:** Alberta landscapes by David Alexander and John Hartman, until Feb. 19, 2007 • **THREE TRAVELLERS:** Artworks by Edmonton artists, Scott Berry, Louis O' Coffey and Leo Wong; until Feb. 19, 2007 • **ART BAR:** Open Dec. 21, 28 (4-8pm) • **Children's Gallery** **ALPHABET SOUP:** incorporating illustrations by Lorna Bennet; through 2006

ARTISTS OPEN STUDIO 7711-85 St (986-0769) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm; Sat 10am-5pm • Paintings by the Alberta Oil Painters group • Until Dec. 31

ART MODE GALLERY 12220 Jasper Ave (453-1555) • **ART IN MINIATURE:** Various artists featuring small artworks from petite paintings to small sculptures; until Dec. 23

ARTSHAB STUDIO GALLERY 10220-105 St (439-9532) • Open every Thu (5-8pm) • **TANGLED REFLECTIONS:** Paintings and drawings by artists of the Coloured Web School of Art • New artworks by ArtsHab Residents • Until Dec. 28

CENTRE D'ARTS VISUELS DE L'ALBERTA (CAVA) 9103-95 Ave (461-3427) • Closed Dec. 23-Jan. 8 • **MEDIUM CELEBRATION:** Artworks by Normand Fontaine, Claude Garneau, Herman Poulin, Marco Laperrière, and Gisèle Grégoire, until Dec. 22 • Artworks by members; Jan. 8-Feb. 7

COLLECTIVE CONTEMPORARY ART 102, 6421-112 Ave (491-0002) • Open Mon-Fri 12-5 30; Thu 12-8pm, Sat 10am-5 30pm; Sun 12-4pm • Artworks by various artists • Open through to Dec. 23 before Christmas

DOUGLAS UDELL GALLERY 10332-124 St (488-4445) • Open, Tue-Fri 9 30-5 30pm • **CHRISTMAS SHOW 2006:** Artworks by gallery artists, featuring works by Nathan Birch • Until Dec. 23

ELECTRONIC DESIGN STUDIO AND GALLERY 1000 Stony Plain Rd (482-1402) • Open: Tue by appointment, Wed-Fri 11am-5 30pm, Sat 11am-4pm, closed long weekends • **COLLECTION 2006:** New artworks by various artists

EXTENSION CENTRE GALLERY 2nd Fl, University Extension Centre, 8303-112 St (492-0166) • **THOSE AMONG US:** Paintings by Izabella Orzelski and Bogdan Koral-Konikowski • Until Jan. 10

FAB GALLERY Rm 1-1 Fine Arts Building, 112 St, 89 Ave (492-2081) • Open: Tue-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 2-5pm • **PAINTING IN ITALY: A VISUAL DIARY:** Studies from museum artifacts and from on-location in Italy are presented unframed for critiques. Photographs and presentation show the students' interests and document the locations they painted • **SCIENCE=MAGIC:** Ike Bushman's final visual presentation for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking, until Dec. 23

FRINGE GALLERY 10516 Whyte Ave (432-0240) • **ORIGINAL Digital FINE ART:** Digital images by Ansgard Thomson; until Dec. 30 • Artworks by Cynthia Gardiner; through January

GALLERY AT MILLNER-STANLEY & MILLNER LIBRARY Main Fl, Sir Winston Churchill Sq (496-7030) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-9pm; Sat 9am-6pm; Sun 1-5pm • **CANADIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS:** The CANSCAIP Collection; until Dec. 30 • **START FROM THE BEGINNING:** Oil on canvas landscape paintings by Lorraine Shulba; Jan. 3-31

GREY NUNS HOSPITAL Out Patient Room, 3015-62 St •

Mon-Fri 8 30am-4pm • Artworks by students from the Artistic Statement School of Fine Art • Until Feb. 28

HARCOURT HOUSE 10215-112 St (426 4180) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 12-4pm • **COWBOYS AND INDIANS (AND MÉTIS?):** Paintings by David Garneau that explore the identity, representations, and meanings of being Métis, until Dec. 23 • **Front Room:** **RUNNING THROUGH FLAMES, AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY PECULIARITIES:** Paul Smith's mixed media artworks feature a trickster figure and connect to mythology and pop culture; until Dec. 23

JEFF ALLEN GALLERY Strathcona Place, 10831 University Ave (433-5282) • Open: Mon-Fri 9am-4pm • **CHRISTMAS SHOW AND SALE:** Artworks by previous exhibitors featuring a variety of styles and mediums; until Jan. 4 • Paul Martol's colourful abstract landscape acrylic paintings; Jan. 9-Feb. 1; opening reception, Jan. 10 • **GALLERY ART WALK:** Jan. 9-Feb. 1

JOHNSON GALLERY (NORTH) 11817-80 St (479-8424) • Open Tue-Fri 9 30am-5 30pm, Sat 9 30am-4pm • **CHRISTMAS ART FAIR:** Artworks by gallery artists as well as invited artists • Through December • **(SOUTH)** 7711-85 St (465-6171) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-5pm • **CHRISTMAS ART FAIR:** Artworks by Jim Painter, Jim Brager, Wendy Risdale, prints by Toti, ceramic art by Heather Goldmine, potter by Noburo Kubo • Through December

LANDO GALLERY 11130-105 Ave (990-1161) • Artworks by Tshila Barzel, and Eric Fredine, until Dec. 22 • **FROZEN IN TIME:** Photographs by Michael Levin • **HORIZONS:** New photographs by Eric Fredine • **THE TREE OF LIFE:** Paintings by Tshila Barzel • Until Dec. 22

LATITUDE 53 GALLERY 10248-106 St (423-5353) • **Main Space:** Artworks by SB Edwards • **Project:** Artworks by Natalie Danchuk • Jan. 5-Feb. 3

LITTLE CHURCH GALLERY Spruce Grove • **CHRISTMAS IN THE LITTLE CHURCH:** Until Dec. 23

LOFT GALLERY AJ Ottewill Arts Centre, 590 Broadmoor Blvd, Sherwood Park (449-4443) • Open Sat 10am-5pm • Artworks by members of the Art Society of Strathcona County • Through December

MCMULLEN GALLERY U of A Hospital, 8440-112 St (407-7152) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-8pm; Sat-Sun 1-8pm • **ALBERTA/WITHIN LIMITS:** Photographs and ceramic works by the Monochrome Guild and Sask Terra Group • Until Jan. 14 2007

MCPAG 5411-51 St, Stony Plain (963-2777) • Open Mon-Sat 10am-4pm; Sun 10am-6 30pm • **SECOND BIENNIAL EXHIBITION:** Works by Parkland Potter's Guild • Until Jan. 14

MUSÉE HÉRITAGE MUSEUM St. Albert Place, 5 St. Anne Street, St. Albert (459-1528) • **WITHIN GROWLING DISTANCE:** Learn about the data collection to analysis of grizzly bear research • Until Jan. 14, 2007

NINA HAGGERTY CENTRE FOR THE ARTS Stollery Gallery, 9702-111 Ave (474-7611) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-2 30pm, Tue 6.30-8 30pm, Thu 6-8pm • **BIG ENOUGH DREAMS—A PHOTO EXHIBITION:** Filmmaker Yvonne DuBourdeau presents a series of black and white photographs from the newly released book and documentary *Big Enough Dreams* • Jan. 8-Feb. 2

PETER ROBERTSON GALLERY (D'AMORE EDUE GALLERY) 10183-112 St (452-0286) • Open Tue-Sat 10am-5 30pm Thu 10am-8pm • Abstracts on mylar by Frances Thomas and fantastic landscapes by Robert Wiseman, until Jan. 14

PROFILES PUBLIC ART GALLERY 19 Perron Street, St. Albert (460-4310) • Open: Tue-Sat (10am-5pm), Thu (10am-8pm) • **PRESENCE:** Artworks by members of various St. Albert arts groups; until Dec. 30 • Drop-in: Art for the Artist at Heart: Jan. 4

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA 8555 Roper Rd • **A JOYFUL HARVEST:** A photo exhibit from the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta salutes the people, places and organizations that have defined Jewish life in southern Alberta since 1889 • Until Jan. 25

ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM 12845-102 Ave (453-9100) • **BOB THE BUILDER—PROJECT: BUILD IT:** Learning through constructive play; until Jan. 28, 2007 • **LEGO OCEAN ADVENTURE:** Create your own sea creatures and learn about the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research with the logger-head turtle; until Jan. 28, 2007 • **IMAGES IN PLATINUM OF WESTERN CANADA'S NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PARKS:** Photographs of Western Canadian parks, from the Rocky Mountains and beyond by Allan King; until Jan. 14

SCOTT GALLERY 10411-124 St (488-3619) • Open Tue-Sat 10am-5pm • **CHRISTMAS TREASURES:** Group show featuring new paintings by Vladimir Horik, Katenna Merikas, Lynn Malin, Harold Feist, sculpture by David Mitchell, pottery by Carol and Richard Selfridge and still life by Linda O'Neill, until Dec. 23 • **20TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION:** Artworks by gallery artists such as Doug Haynes, Vladimir Horik, Francine Gravel, Leslie Poole and Robert Sinclair as well as Jim Davies and Akiko Tamaguchi, until Dec. 23

STUDIO GALLERY 11 Perron Street, St. Albert (460-5993) • Open, Thu 12-8pm; Fri 10am-6pm; Sat 10am-5pm • **SMALL WORKS:** Artworks by studio artists • Until Dec. 31

URBAN ROOTS SALON AND GALLERY 10418-82 Ave behind Sapphires (438-7978) • Sculptures by Ritchie Velthuis, mixed media artworks by Stuart Ballah, paintings by Cuira and figurative works by Glenys Switzer • Through December

VAAA GALLERY 3rd Fl, Harcourt House, 10215-112 St (421-1731) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-4pm; Sat 12-4pm • **SPECTRUM:** Artworks by Lundy Dale, Pam Weber, and Thaneah Krohn • Until Dec. 21

WALTERS PLAYHOUSE 10411-84 Ave (464-7357) • **Art in the Lobby:** On canvas by Will Korub in conjunction with *A Christmas in Wales* • Until Dec. 16 before curtain

LITERARY

BLUE CHAIR CAFÉ 9624-76 Ave (464-7357) • An opportunity for writers to share their talents and show off • Third Wed each month (donation)

CASTLE ROCK PUB 570 St. Albert R (31) • Writing evenings every Sunday (7-9pm) • Ends, holidays and summer months • No 2007

CITY ARTS CENTRE 10411-84 Ave (464-7357) • TALE S monthly Storytelling Circle • To listen • Second Fri of each month • It time free)

HULBERT'S CAFÉ 7601-115 St • The Olive Re Series • 2nd Tue each month • Featuring local Martin-DeMoor, Tue, Jan. 9

NAKED CYBER CAFÉ 10354 Jasper Ave • Live and performance art open stage hosted by the Eclectic Electric Orchestra • Every Thu (Rem)

ROSIE'S BAR AND GRILL 10475 Story Café: TALE S • First Thu of June (7-9pm) • \$5 • TALE'S New Storytelling Café Featuring storytellers McLean, David Haas, and Dawn Blue dynamics and engaging stories of first starts to open mic for 5-minute stories (told not read) • T (7-9pm)

UPPER CRUST BISTRO 10909-88 Ave • Story Poets' Haven: Reading series is an opportunity for enthusiasts to enjoy poetry in an intimate setting every Mon night, through to Mar (7-9pm), coffee, tea and poetry) • Featuring Pierrette Requier, Diane Buchanan, and T Featuring Anna Mioduchowska, Don Lav Dawson, and Seaneen O'Rourke, Jan. 15

LIVE COMEDY

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JUMBLE ALBUMS presents Ron White's *You Can't* • ences • Fri, Jan. 5 (7 30pm) • \$10

SIDETRACK CAFÉ 10238-104 St • K Battle hosted by Kathleen McGee featuring ing comics every Thu (9 30pm), \$3 (door)

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THEATRE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Dickens, adapted by Tom Wood, directed by Tom Wood as Ebenezer Scrooge • Featuring Tom Wood as Ebenezer Scrooge • Tickets available at the Citadel box office

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL PROJECT 1757) • Singer-songwriter musical and Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* • Dec. 19-12pm) • \$32 at TIX on the Square

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Almodóvar's *Volver* full of many brilliant returns

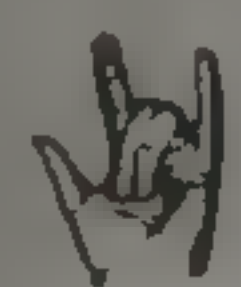
GRADN / joesel@vuwweekly.com

The title of Pedro Almodóvar's latest means "to return" and is accordingly characterized by numerous visits to or in the past as a method of coping with the present. In *Volver*, one mother returns to the village of her birth and site of previous misfortunes while another appears from beyond the grave, coming back to settle unfinished business.

There are also returns of an extra-narrative nature that lend texture to *Volver*, such as the return of the brilliant actress Carmen Maura to collaborate with Almodóvar for the first time in 18 years (their last outing being the blimely funny *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*), and the writer/director's return to the superstitious Castilian village he fled in his youth for the cosmopolitan pleasures of Madrid.

These returns collectively yield richness in specificity and richness. His tale of families bonded by the multitude of vivacious, slightly crazy women, haunted by what seems a curse of ugly fate facilitated by allure and denial, is in some regards familiar ground for Almodóvar, though he and his collaborators renovate the themes with invention and expertise, resulting in a film that belongs in the company of Almodóvar's finest recent work, such as *Talk to Her*.

It also results in an impressive endurance of comedy. Death, illness,



THIS ROCKS



COMEDY

OPENS FRI, DEC 22

VOLVERWRITTEN & DIRECTED BY PEDRO ALMODÓVAR
STARRING PENÉLOPE CRUZ, CARMEN MAURA,
LOLA DUEÑAS, BLANCA PORTILLO

loneliness, violence and exploitation permeate *Volver*, yet in no way do these elements suppress its driving comic spirit, evident in the farcical disguising of one character as a homeless Russian hairdresser, the opening

scenes of obsessive cemetery upkeep or in the apparent materialization of a ghost via its distinctive farts.

MORE IMPRESSIVE STILL is how such irreverence remains untainted by condescension to the eccentric, manic characters. Indeed, *Volver* features moments among the most heartfelt in Almodóvar's oeuvre, chief among them a scene that nearly threatens to transform the film into a musical for some sweetly melancholy minutes,

functioning as a sort of reunion of three generations of mothers and daughters—though only two of the characters present are privy to the reunion even happening.

Is this getting confusing? I'm reluctant to tell you much about the plot of *Volver*, firstly because it contains so many surprises, but secondly because it's so rife with subplots, detours and backstory that I could exhaust this space just outlining it.

Let me tell you this: while Maura

gives a truly wonderful performance, *Volver* actually centres around—and ultimately belongs to—Penélope Cruz. Cruz's Raimunda is the intersection of *Volver*'s numerous paths: a demented aunt who mysteriously becomes lucid in the moment of death; a husband who abruptly, grotesquely departs; a daughter on the verge of womanhood and the discovery of some disturbing family history; an ill cousin trying to locate a missing parent.

Raimunda responds to the tumult with curious activities, such as illegally taking over a friend's restaurant (where her spontaneous decision to sing initiates the spell-binding musical interlude referred to earlier). Raimunda is a force of nature, a pushy, uptight mamacita who exhibits peculiar grace, beguilingly embodied by Cruz as a twitchy, preternaturally maternal, mercurial woman of action that's all guts and tough love, jiggly cleavage and (prosthetic) ass. Hers is a sweaty, effervescent performance sharpened by hairpin turns.

It's easy to presume that Cruz simply needed to act in Spanish again to regain her credibility, but it's also a matter of being offered a good role, one urging her to rise to the occasion, by an author of female characters unusually rounded in their flaws, strengths, idiosyncrasies and charms.

Volver is an elegant, loopy, gorgeous and very entertaining film, but it's also proof that great movies often emerge from the most fruitful collaborations. Here's hoping Almodóvar and Cruz return to theirs. ♥

Are you going to stay in and watch movies all day?

THE MOVIEGOER

PAUL MATWYCHUK
matwyc@vuwweekly.com

I moved to Key West, I was determined to bring as few possessions with me as I could. That's partly because I wanted to minimize the cost of shipping my stuff down to Florida, and partly because I truly loathe moving. I'm an incurable hoarder, the kind of person who tends to pile up stuff, wear a nice comfy rut into it, and stay there for a few years until I'm jolted out of it by some huge outside force. I'd been living at my old apartment for about five years, and I was not looking forward to the task of throwing out all the stuff I wouldn't be needing anymore. I lived on the third floor, after all, and the way leading down to the dumpster in the rear parking lot was very steep and treacherous. To my great fortune, however, a renovation crew was doing some renovations to the building—and they'd

parked a gigantic, industrial-size trashbin on the ground directly below me. What this meant was that I could save myself dozens of tiring trips up and down the stairs and literally throw my unwanted possessions out my window.

It was exhilarating. Out they went: old clothes too frayed and stained to donate to charity, piles of Xeroxed play scripts I'd accumulated during my days as a theatre reviewer, half-empty jars of sauces, oils and condiments from the backmost reaches of my refrigerator, even the sad, flattened futon I'd been sleeping on ever since I moved out of university. I even threw a going-away party for myself where I invited my guests to raid my bookshelves and CD piles—anything to lighten the load for my impending trip.

And yet, I found it impossible to surrender anything from my DVD collection. Now, I have a lot of box sets and expensive special editions from the Criterion Collection

that obviously I wasn't about to just give away, but there was some greedy impulse inside of me that refused to allow me to break up the set by so much as one disc. Not even that cut-rate used copy of *Runaway Jury* I'd picked up at Rogers Video because buying it would have cost only a buck or two more than renting it. The collection must remain intact!

I only brought about 30 books with me to Florida—the rest went into storage—but for some reason I felt compelled to bring all my DVDs with me. They fit into two large boxes. And when I finally lined the discs up on the shelves in my new Key West home, nearly in alphabetical order again, just like in the old days, I felt a tremendous surge of satisfaction. Almost nothing in this new living space actually belonged to me—much of the furniture consisted of castoffs from my new boss's house—and my DVD collection seemed like the only thing that bore the stamp of my own tastes and personality.

I MOVED AGAIN this week, to a larger and nicer apartment about four blocks down the street from my old one. And so once again I packed my (now even larger) DVD collection into those same two (now battered) cardboard boxes and schlepped them into the van parked in front of my building. Helping me move was Rick, who helps distribute the magazine I now work for, and his son Ricky. Both of them are very sweet, generous guys who are in incredible shape—which was fortunate, because my new apartment is once again on the third floor of a building with those narrow, old-fashioned, paper-clip-shaped staircases that turn carrying couches upstairs into a grueling task that's like a weightlifting contest crossed with a geometry exam.

My boxes of DVDs were one of the last things that had to be taken upstairs. I hadn't even been carrying the heaviest items, but I was exhausted—my legs were rubbery, my arms were limp, and my

shortness of breath was causing a dull pain in my upper back, like a heavy foot on my spine, just behind my lungs.

Still, I decided to do my part and lug at least one of those boxes to the top. But about a third of the way through my trip, I realized I had gotten myself into serious trouble: my pace was slowing, my thighs were getting heavier with each new step, my hold on the box was getting clumsier and clumsier.

A few steps later, I realized, to my horror, Rick and Ricky watching me struggle a few feet behind me, that this was the precise punishment I could imagine waiting for me in the afterlife. Burdened, for all eternity, like Jacob Marley in his chains, with the ponderous, useless weight of all the DVDs I'd bought in my wasted lifetime—and unable to move because of all the time I'd spent watching movies instead of exercising.

Come the new year, I am going to have to join a gym. Either that, or Netflix. ♥

We Are Marshall may be a true story, but it's not the whole story

CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vuweekly.com

In a fall that saw the release of at least two inspirational football flicks, you'll be forgiven for seeing the trailer for *We Are Marshall* and thinking, "oh, ho-hum."



THIS IS OK

While I can't say that, on some levels, this isn't a story you've seen before, I do think that there is something else going on here, something that cynical reviewers with their jockstraps in a knot have ignored.

There's no doubt that American-style football fever is a valuable player to this McG- (*Charlie's Angels*—but don't hold that against it) helmed film, but it seems to me that the story it tells is more one of healing than sports glory.

In 1970, the real Marshall University in West Virginia lost most of its football team and coaching staff to a

DRAMA

OPENS FRI, DEC 22

WE ARE MARSHALL

DIRECTED BY MCG

WRITTEN BY JAMIE LINDEN, CORY HELMS

STARRING MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY, MATTHEW FOX, DAVID STRATHAIRN

tragic plane accident. What *We Are Marshall* strives to tell is how the small community of Huntington dealt with the loss of 75 of its sons, fathers, mothers, coaches and teachers.

The cautious college president Donald Dedmon (David Strathairn) takes on the monumental task of finding a new coach (Matthew McConaughey) and convincing the NCAA that, in the case of Marshall U, the organization should allow freshmen to play college ball.

MANY CRITICS HAVE lambasted the film for being cliché and emotionally over-wrought—which on some levels



is true. Others have slammed the use of McConaughey as the quirky Jack Lengyel, and while it's true that he's not handled the deepest roles of late, he has managed some extremely strong performances, especially early on in his career, and he rises to the

occasion here.

We Are Marshall is a weeper, there's no doubt about it, and no, we're not talking stellar cinema here, but the film does make you wonder about people and how they deal with loss. Despite the veering to cliché, this is

not the film's primary fault—there's still an emotional core that is hazy on this level.

No, where the film fails is in its fuzzy nostalgic lens. In its bid to tell some sort of timeless story of inspiration, of triumph over adversity, *We Are Marshall* completely ignores the texture of its '70s backdrop—outsiders, the outrageous plaid slacks and sideburns, that is.

There's nary a mention of the Vietnam War or an inkling of racial tension. And there are no hippie potheads or even people who swear. Everybody in Huntington is squeaky clean.

I think that these are the elements that make *We Are Marshall* lose its credibility. Without the depth of forces at work, all we are left with is a generic phoenix-from-the-ashes story—well-acted and deeply felt, generic nonetheless. ▽

THE SMASH HIT PLAY IS NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE COMEDY!

SUN

IMMENSELY LIKEABLE, ENTERTAINING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING.

JOHN COULBOURN

New York

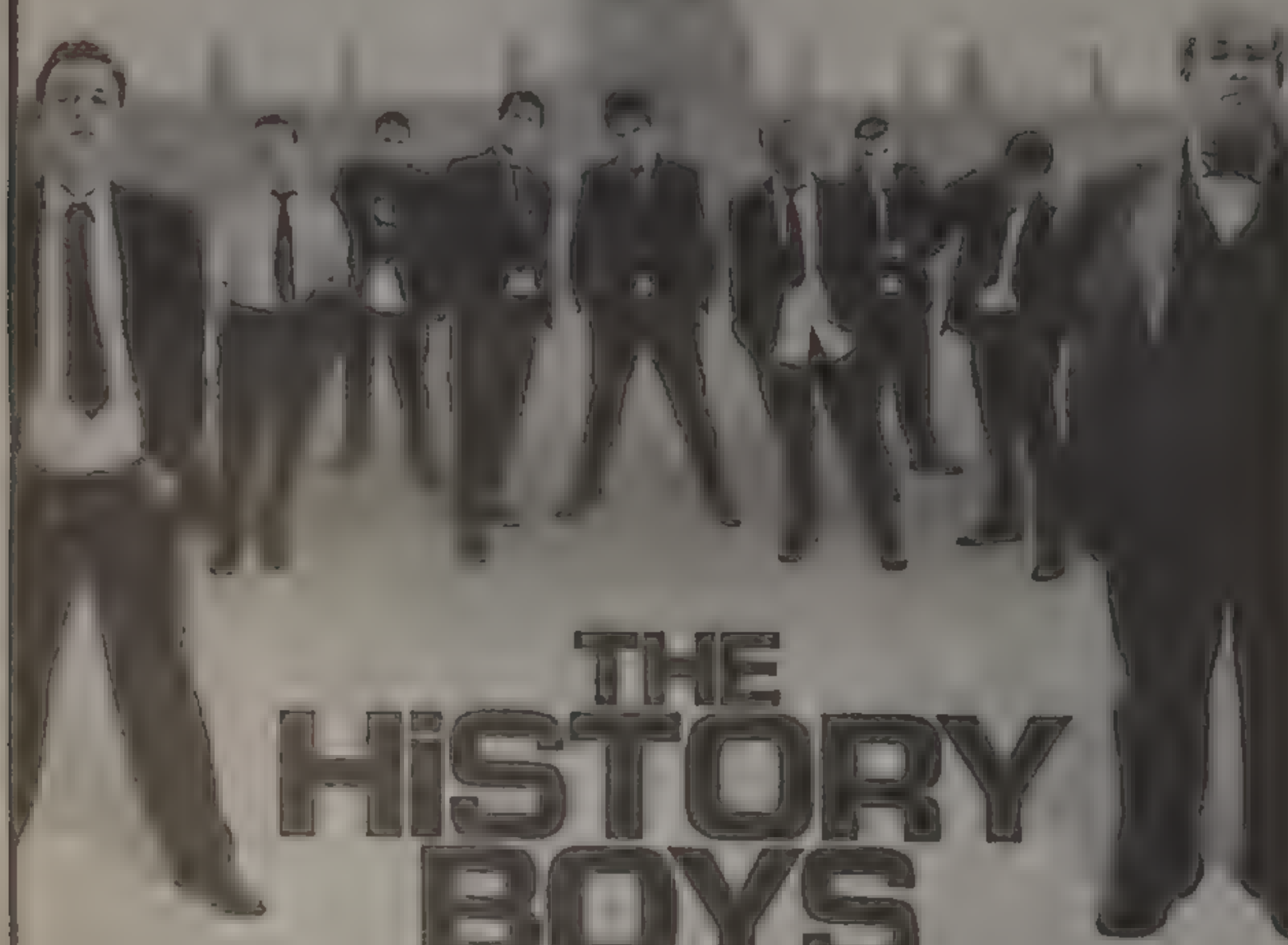
BRILLIANT AND INFECTIOUS... 'THE HISTORY BOYS' IS EXPLOSIVELY ALIVE.

David Edelstein

NEW YORK OBSERVER

ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT, 'THE HISTORY BOYS' IS A BLOOMING MIRACLE. I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT.

ROBERT



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JOSEF BRAUN / josef@vuweekly.com

Kate Winslet has good reason to be pissed off at Todd Field and Tom Perrotta. *Little Children*, adapted by the pair from Perrotta's novel, is a problematic film, and it needn't be so. It features a number of beautifully realized moments—as potent as anything you'll find in American movies this year. If only those moments fit together in some cohesive way.



THIS IS OK

Little Children is a multi-character drama set in some anonymous middle-class residential area. It attempts to breach a multitude of appropriately middle-class sources of anxiety, such as infidelity, occupational dissatisfaction and child safety. Basically, it's about communities and the individuals in them trying to overcome their more chaotic, or child-like, impulses (something you could also say about Field and Perrotta).

While the breadth of its scope finally proves unmanageable, among the film's real strengths are a number of superlative performances, particularly from Winslet, who's been given a role that's potentially rich but which never gives her room to breathe. For an actor of such singular earthy charms, Winslet hasn't had many starring roles equal to her abilities. Sarah Pierce, the unhappily married suburban stay-at-home mom with hidden romantic/literary aspirations, comes close, but is never allowed to come to fruition.

A constant problem is that several of Winslet's best moments here are non-verbal: the way she tries to mask her pleasure when her also-married lover Brad (Patrick Wilson) tells her he fought with his wife (Jennifer Connelly) all weekend; the deliciously ecstatic way she dances in the middle of an

DRAMA

OPENS FRI, DEC 22

LITTLE CHILDREN

DIRECTED BY TODD FIELD

WRITTEN BY FIELD, TOM PERROTTA

STARRING KATE WINSLET, PATRICK WILSON, JENNIFER CONNELLY, JACKIE EARLE HALEY

otherwise empty row of bleachers when Brad leads his late-night football team to victory.

So often, as we see Winslet's face and body in a moment of dynamic transition, the effect is squashed by a hopelessly superfluous voiceover, a running narration spoken by a strange, unseen man that makes explicit to us the delicate emotional shifts that are more than self-evident—and much more compelling—in Winslet's performance.

THIS SORT OF voiceover is a classic screenwriting blunder, one often made by novelists who can't grasp the fact that their painstakingly selected words are no longer needed once a story is translated into film.

Over and over, Perrotta's words redundantly clarify who's thinking what in *Little Children*, even though the actors are already externalizing these thoughts and Field, as he did so elegantly with *In the Bedroom*, frequently stages scenes to punctuate their unspoken tensions, encapsulating mood with strikingly austere compositions.

Winslet isn't the only actor trying to deliver a great performance here. Jackie Earle Haley, playing Ronnie, a middle-aged man released from prison after exposing himself to a child, brings tremendous sensitivity and a certain courageous grotesquery to his role, one cleverly cast (Haley, once a successful child actor, seems unnervingly appropriate as a man

whose sexual maturity never progressed passed childhood)

Likewise, the wonderful La Adams (*Happiness*) is only on screen for a few minutes, but each one is arresting. She gives a luminous heart-rending turn as a woman with the unfortunate luck to have accepted a date with Ronnie.

However, a more carefully judged rendering of *Little Children* probably wouldn't have half of these characters in it. Where *In the Bedroom* was a stark extrapolation of Andre Dubuque's short story, *Little Children* is a messy awkward condensation of Perrotta's novel, taking one distracting detail after another in order to stuff more into it, finally bringing everybody together in the last act in a really absurd, entirely convenient manner. (It's like *Never Learned Anything from Watching Short Cuts* or *Magnolia*.)

In trying to get it all, Field and Perrotta sell their better ideas short. Characters are routinely given a rough sketch and then abandoned: Sarah's porn-obsessed husband; the snooty coven of gossiping neighbourhood moms; the nut whose mission in life has become the continual harassment of Ronnie; not to mention Ronnie himself, whose final act of repentance is the film's final push into the abyss of forced tragedy.

Of course, if you're at all intrigued by this sort of film, I still encourage you to see it. *Little Children* is a substantial. The elements of the film that seem stupid seem so because others are invested with intelligence and emotional rigour.

In the end, the film doesn't win, but in its failures, it nonetheless announces Field as a major talent, one whose pitfalls are simply not the table for everyone to see. ▽

Stiller makes spending the *Night at the Museum* a decent date

BRAUN / joan@vuweekly.com
The idea at the heart of *Night at the Museum*—that history is kept by our imagination, our desire to learn—is sized effectively in a



and, for the film's diverting duration, at least, a good many adults. *Night at the Museum* draws its muse from that certain spectral pliancy that public spaces inspire: the people go home, the doors locked and secret nocturnal forces in control. The public space in case is Manhattan's Museum of Natural History, where, thanks to a magical Egyptian tablet (a half-baked conceit, but it gets the ball rolling), every sunset brings the displays to life. As directed by Shawn Levy (*The Hot Chick*) and adapted by Ben Grant and Thomas Lennon from Ron Trench's book, you're forced to through a token amount of dopiness to get to the fun stuff.

FAMILY
OPENS FRI, DEC 22
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
DIRECTED BY SHAWN LEVY
WRITTEN BY BEN GRANT, THOMAS LENNON
STARRING BEN STILLER, CARLA GUGINO, DICK VAN DYKE, ROBIN WILLIAMS



Likable loser Larry (Ben Stiller) can't hold down a job and struggles to convince his ex-wife and yuppie-in-training kid of his stability as a part-time parent. The scenes with the ex and her cardboard stockbroker husband drag but are mercifully brief, and soon enough Larry lands the job that will transform his nowhere existence.

LARRY INHERITS HIS night watchman job from a motley trio whose average age is around 75—Bill Cobbs and octogenarians Dick Van Dyke and Mickey Rooney seem like they could almost constitute a historical display of their own, which of course is the joke. The elderly mischievions leave

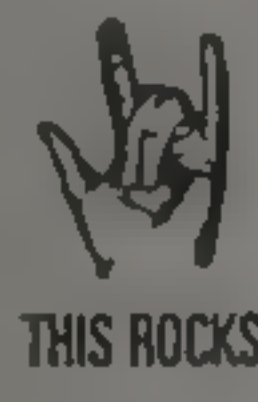
Larry largely unprepared for duties that include playing fetch with T-Rex, moderating peace treaties between Romans and cowboys, bitch-slapping a monkey and coaxing Attila the Hun

into coming to terms with the emotional residue of a troubled childhood.

A lot of why this works comes down to Stiller, essentially the only actor who brings the right tone to scenes both within the magic Museum and out in the recognizable day-to-day world. His kid's pretty stiff, the oldsters eventually get stuck in acting out some humdrum hijinks, and Carla Gugino (Spy Kids' yummy super-mummy), in a dud role as Larry's Museum co-worker seems at a bit of a loss as to what to offer beyond a medley of shocked-amazed facial expressions. So Stiller dominates the movie, which actually works just fine. His ability to embody frustration and juvenile gamesmanship as well as awe and a respect for knowledge makes him the ideal actor to go nine rounds with ooga-booga Neanderthals, faceless Civil War re-enactors and tiny, blow dart-crazy Mayans (who get invested with about as much depth here as they do in *Apocalypse*). ▽

Snow Cake avoids sickly sweetness

LYE LILLEBUEEN / steve@vuweekly.com
It's quite astonishing that *Snow Cake*, an absolute jewel of a film set in the small town of Wawa, Ontario, has failed to garner a single Golden Globe



It's any consolation, these glitzy award shows typically mean little, generally only lining the pockets of radio execs who've hired the best marketing gurus. This situation is an oddity, however, as the film has everything that critics, marketing gurus, award shows and gushing audiences crave: a touching story, name actors in small budget roles and a major issue—this time, autism—woven into the script in some kind of a clever way. Everything. Yet, despite this kind of film's tendency to be overly sentimental, *Snow Cake* delivers a powerful message without anything too dramatic, or cinematic, taking over. Full disclosure, never: I tend to have a soft spot for the film's subject matter but the objection here is that anyone with a heart is going to find the story charming, witty and, at times, tragic.



DRAMA
OPENS MON, DEC 25
SNOW CAKE
DIRECTED BY MARC EVANS
WRITTEN BY ANGELA PELL
STARRING ALAN RICKMAN, SIGOURNEY WEAVER, CARRIE-ANNE MOSS

the road again. Part of what makes the basic script work so well is that Alex doesn't treat Linda any differently because she's autistic. In a way, they both have character flaws and therefore learn a bit from each other—using the issue-driven theme of autism as a method to relate to one another.

WITHIN THE BEAUTY of this story there are faults; of course. A subplot involving Carrie-Anne Moss as Maggie, the

town floozy, seems placed in the script solely to speed up the pacing rather than to add anything essential to the story.

There are also obvious connections to be made to *Rain Man* here as well, but at least this film tends to steer clear of any paths that the Hollywood award-winner may be credited with creating.

Despite all the corny angles that could have sunk this film to the bottom of critics' must-see lists, *Snow Cake* doesn't try to be anything bigger than it is, and in doing so, the film becomes a fantastic experience. Rookie screenwriter Angela Pell and Welsh director Marc Evans have managed to pull off a genuinely buzz-worthy film—even if the buzz hasn't gone anywhere in Hollywood so far. ▽

3 GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD NOMINATIONS
BEST PICTURE
BEST ACTRESS • KATE WINSLET
BEST SCREENPLAY • TODD FIELD & TOM PERROTTA

BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
TODD FIELD & TOM PERROTTA

BEST ACTRESS
KATE WINSLET
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
JACKIE EARLE HALEY

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Little Children

STARTS FRIDAY! PRINCESS DAILY AT: 6:50, 9:20 SAT./TUES. MAT AT 2:00



SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE



Old flicks get new life on DVD —for the cinephile on your list

JOSEF BRAUN / josef@vulture.com

All across this nation, movie-love afflicts our citizenry. I don't know the latest statistics, but the chances of your having friends or family members who qualify as bona fide movie nerds are alarmingly high.

However, the spirit of the season traditionally requires that we indulge the obsessions and addictions of our nearest and dearest, and so for those wracking their brains for what might best satisfy their favourite cinephile, here are some recommendations of recent DVD releases: very particular films for very particular recipients.

FOR THE WISECRACKING, HARD-BOILED CYNIC ... AND CHARACTER ACTOR ENTHUSIAST!

The mother of what would much later be dubbed film noir—and the source of virtually every cliché accoutrement of the detective picture—John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) rewards repeated viewings handsomely, proving that nothing spells top-shelf entertainment quite like fatalism, back-stabbing, claustrophobia and greed.

Humphrey Bogart defined his screen persona with Sam Spade, a private dick who sleeps with his partner's wife, never saw a billfold he didn't like and mostly seems as cold as the grave-digging implement he's named after. He's also charmingly cagey, vulnerable to femmes fatale and a master of repartee. (When accused of always having a smooth explanation, Spade retorts, "What do you want me to do, learn to stutter?")

Bogey keeps extremely good company: Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet, Elisha Cook and Peter Lorre—as an inimitable gardenia-smelling dandy so aroused by danger, riches and the promise of the body-searching Bogart, he nearly fellates the head of his cane upon entering Spade's expressionistically lit office.

Warner's new three-disc set has a routine documentary on the film and a commentary by Eric Lax that's mostly biographical histories. What makes the package worthwhile are two previous versions of Dashiell Hammett's source novel. The 1931 *Falcon's* of interest mainly for its bold emphasis on sex, while 1936's *Satan Met a Lady* turns the same narrative into a surprisingly successful comedy featuring a knockout performance from Bette Davis.

FOR THE HONEY-LOVING SPANGLOPHILE SEDUCED BY RAPTUROUS AMBIGUITY ... AND DUTCH PAINTING!

Victor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) is a spellbinding, spooky, strangely textured, hauntingly beautiful film of always fading autumnal light, spare interiors and enveloping enigma, observing Franco's Spain through the prism of two young sisters in a small village cradled upon a

DVD | GIFTING

windswept Castilian plain.

Through six-year-old Ana (Ana Torrent) and her introduction to *Frankenstein*, Erice investigates the pedagogical nature of seeing, particularly of seeing movies that seem to draw mystically upon the viewer's personal experience of the world before spilling over and into it.

Though often mined for anti-Fascist parables, Erice's debut withholds any routes to easy interpretation, favouring sequences pitched toward subjective understandings of sensation and discovery—of elements, places, objects, sounds, secrets and colours—utilizing a wide range of cinematic vocabulary to balance ambiguity with endlessly intriguing specificity.

Criterion's superb new two-disc set includes an amusing, insightful new interview with actor Fernando Fernán Gómez (who was relieved when he learned Erice didn't care that he couldn't make heads or tails of the script) and a very good documentary featuring the reclusive Erice and Torrent, whom Erice feared had her childhood cut short by inhabiting her character's ineffable trauma so utterly.

FOR THE ICON-WORSHIPPING HEDONIST, SEXUALLY SOPHISTICATED FEMINIST ... AND WEEKEND MISOGYNIST!

One hundred years after her birth and a good 60 since her retirement from movies, Louise Brooks has only flourished as an icon for seemingly contradictory camps.

She remains the quintessential case study of the artist merging near-completely with her fictional counterpart, namely Lulu, the perilously beguiling heroine of GW Pabst's 1929 masterpiece *Pandora's Box*, now available in a beautiful, generously supplemented two-disc set from Criterion.

Watching Brooks's disarmingly natural performance in Pabst's elegantly structured episodic-poetic narrative, she seems as fresh a revelation now as ever, inhabiting a role unusual in movies to this day—the innocent siren or unconscious femme fatale.

In bringing this story of a girl so reckless, sexy and elusive as to facilitate tragedy in all attempting to possess her, Pabst employed countless inspired techniques: the ongoing contrasts of characters with artificial doubles—in paintings, statues or sketches—that reveal their shadow-selves; the balance of frenzied action with moments of remarkable stillness; the use of smoke as a melancholy emblem of ephemerality, building gradually through the film until the final moments simply swallow the last figures into rolling mist.

Disc One has four different scores and a commentary track by scholars

Thomas Elsaesser and Mary Doane, who make a pretty dissonant, academically poised but offer a string of tremendous insights, with Doane emphasizing film's "orchestra of gazes." Brooks's role as "the representative pure presence," while Elsaesser relates how *Pandora's Box* is analogous to cinema as a whole and a forerunner to the deeper studies of women as collateral, prompting other explorations from Jean-Luc Godard and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Disc Two has a conventional, highly informative bio-doc on Brooks, an interview with Pabst, and, best of all, Richard Leacock's Susan Steinberg's 1984 film *Lulu in Berlin*, which features a rare interview with Brooks, a candid, terrifically engaging storyteller. Also included are essays by J. Hoberman and Kenneth Tynan.

FOR THE COMPLICATED MACHO MAN WHO SHUNS MASTERPIECES ... AND LOVES SELF-HATING GERMANS!

Sometimes when you fall in love with a particular director's work, it's flawed films you come to treasure most. Some Hitchcock fans go for *Lifeboat*, some Scorsese fans jazzed over *New York, New York*, some Billy Wilder fans defend bleak WWII POW comedy *Stalag 17* tooth and nail.

Reuniting Wilder with William Holden three years after *Sun Boulevard*, *Stalag 17* (1953) has played going for it. There's a brilliantly staged opening escape, Otto Preminger's kooky Nazi and Holden, right off bat, glibly announcing his willingness to profit from the misfortunes of fellow prisoners. He's also accused of selling information to the Nazis, American squealing on other Americans," one character exclaims in disbelief—meanwhile McCarthyists just building up steam.

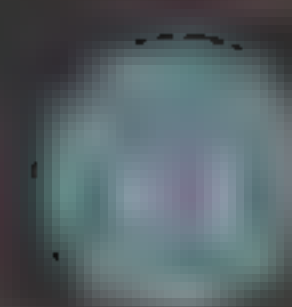
Stalag 17 was based on a Broadway play, full of broad comedy that's as sly as *Hogan's Heroes* and even luv one-upped by *M*A*S*H*. Typically Wilder (who fled Germany during the onset of Fascism), it's best when it's audaciously sour and convincing when it relegates evil to its cast of likable Yanks. It's uneven and morally compromised film, yet is still very fun and, in the end, maybe more interesting than problems.

Paramount's disc has a commentary track from a trio of the actors, amiable old times that's out who's still around, good times and not saying a lot that's enlightening. However, a short doc on the film is included and an additional doc on the stories of US POWs is fascinating with plenty of great first-person stories that often confirm some of the seemingly implausible content of the film. ▽

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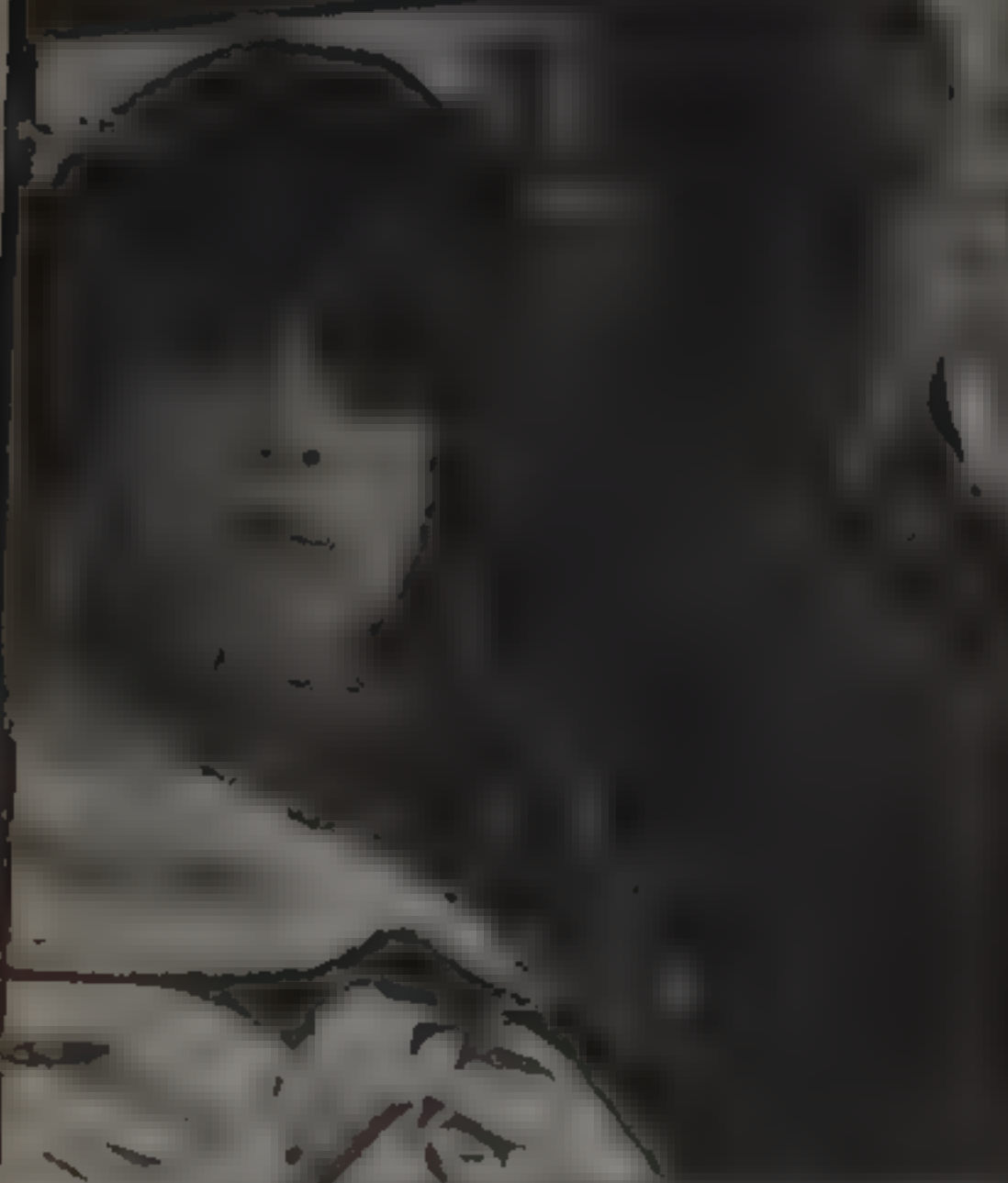


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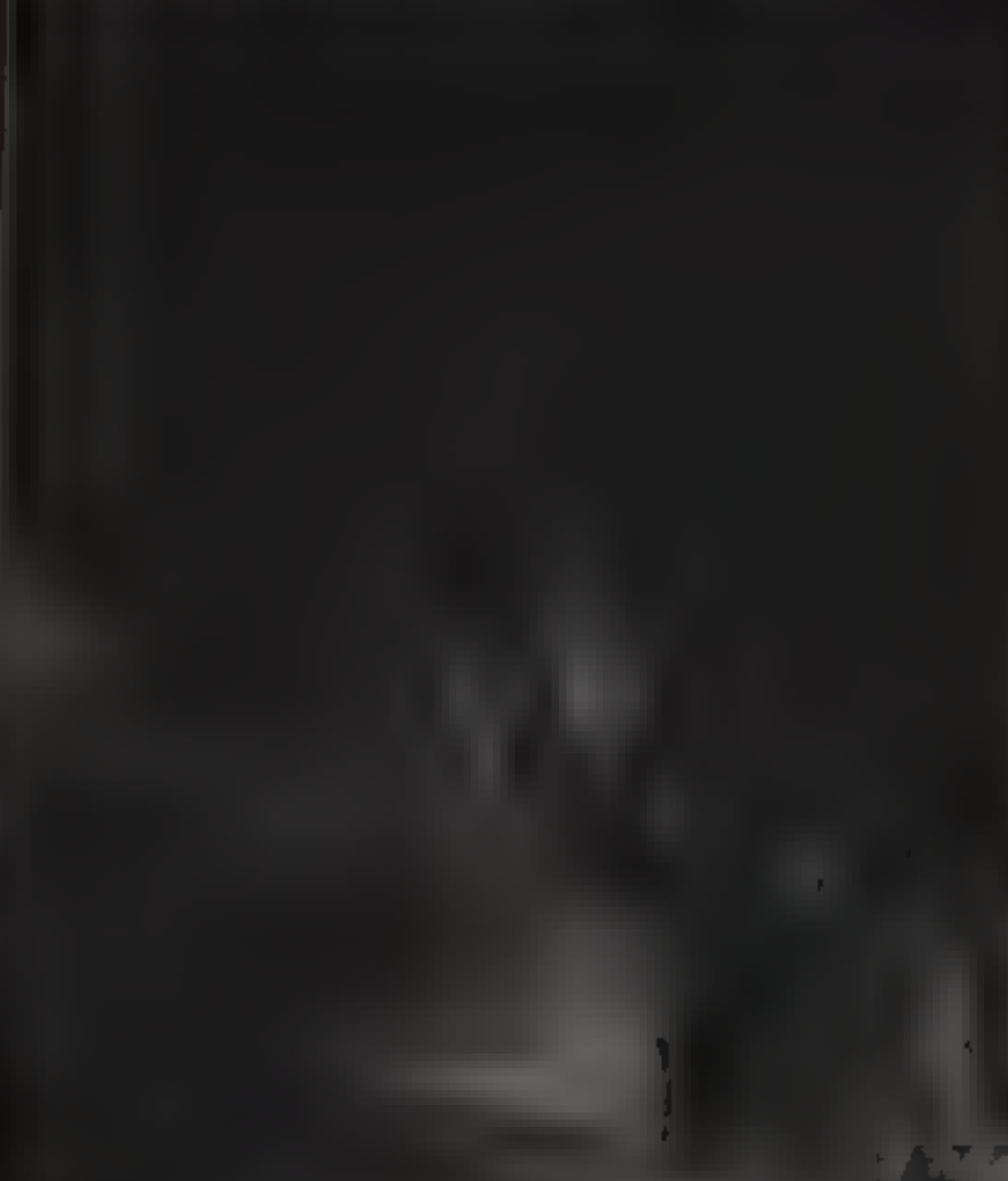
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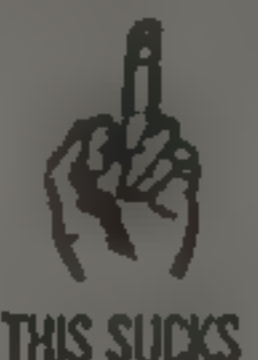
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Rocky Balboa forgets the lesson of the eye of the tiger

DAVID BERRY / david@vuwweekly.com

Rocky Balboa is one of those truly rare films that is actually meta-predictable: while watching it, one cannot only predict what's going to happen, but what the response will be from thunderingly past-their-prime critics, both amateur and professional, who are unable to distinguish art from nostalgia anymore.



Yeah, Rocky climbs the steps, and yes, Peter Travers and Richard Roeper will hail it as a return to form! a triumph! The Italian Stallion rides again! Stallone just happens to get lucky that his own career irrelevance feeds the mythos.

Stallone's rampant "those were the days" boomer-baiting (and the critic's tacit approval of it) would be far more easy to stomach if it wasn't so intrinsically tied to shitting on the here and now (well, and if Stallone hadn't spent four films erasing any emotional weight the original might have had by fighting Mr T and a Russian robot, but one complaint at a time).

Pretty much anyone under 40 in the movie is entirely bereft of any redeemable qualities until they start to see things Rocky's/Stallone's way: lazy, disrespectful barflys try to get



DRAMA NOW PLAYING
ROCKY BALBOA
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY SYLVESTER STALLONE
STARRING STALLONE, BURT YOUNG, ANTONIO TAVAR, GERALDINE HUGHES

free drinks off of him; the reigning champ is a greedy, disrespectful egotist only concerned with his legacy; Rocky's own son is a disrespectful, distant coward—hell, even the sport of boxing is a pathetic excuse for the sweet science it used to be (you can't rightly call a sport disrespectful, but it would almost be a fitting adjective).

But everything is, naturally, redeemed when Rocky touches it: son straightened out; champ gets a heart; shiftless barfly ain't a loser no more; boxing rules again. It's the old ways that are right, you see—also, please ignore the fact that Stallone was young once, no doubt looking every bit as silly to the old folks as he makes the young people look here. But that, was, you know, him; the world's crazy now, what with your rap music, and no respect for the fine art of getting punched in the face.

THIS BELIES, OF COURSE, another key point: certainly there's something to be respected about Stallone's character—that is, a big, dumb lummo who doesn't know any better than to fight. As for Stallone himself, well, his failings are his own—not the result of the

world—and almost two hours of wondering why the world has been by is extra hollow for it

Unlike his character Stallone is ridiculous because he's Stallone and should know when to quit. Stallone is ridiculous because he's 20 years making himself ridiculous which is still on ample display.

His direction is clunky, but his biggest flaw is his writing. Some semi-natural dialogue. Stallone the director has trouble (telling), but it's completely kitchy. Inability to develop any character other than himself, and a reliance on escape contrivance.

The ham-handed direction nation shows full well why the chise dipped so much. It's self-parody: most of Stallone's characters only work when they're over-the-top (Clubber Lang) and he can only latch onto the obvious of big themes (Rocky vs Communism, Rocky vs Old Age).

None of it really works when the critics are asked to look the many deficiencies in the sake of a good story, both in the film and surrounding it.

Make no mistake, though this case is Italian. Stallone isn't any more redeemable than other Rocky with a number attached to it—not that the first was good as some people would say anyway. **v**


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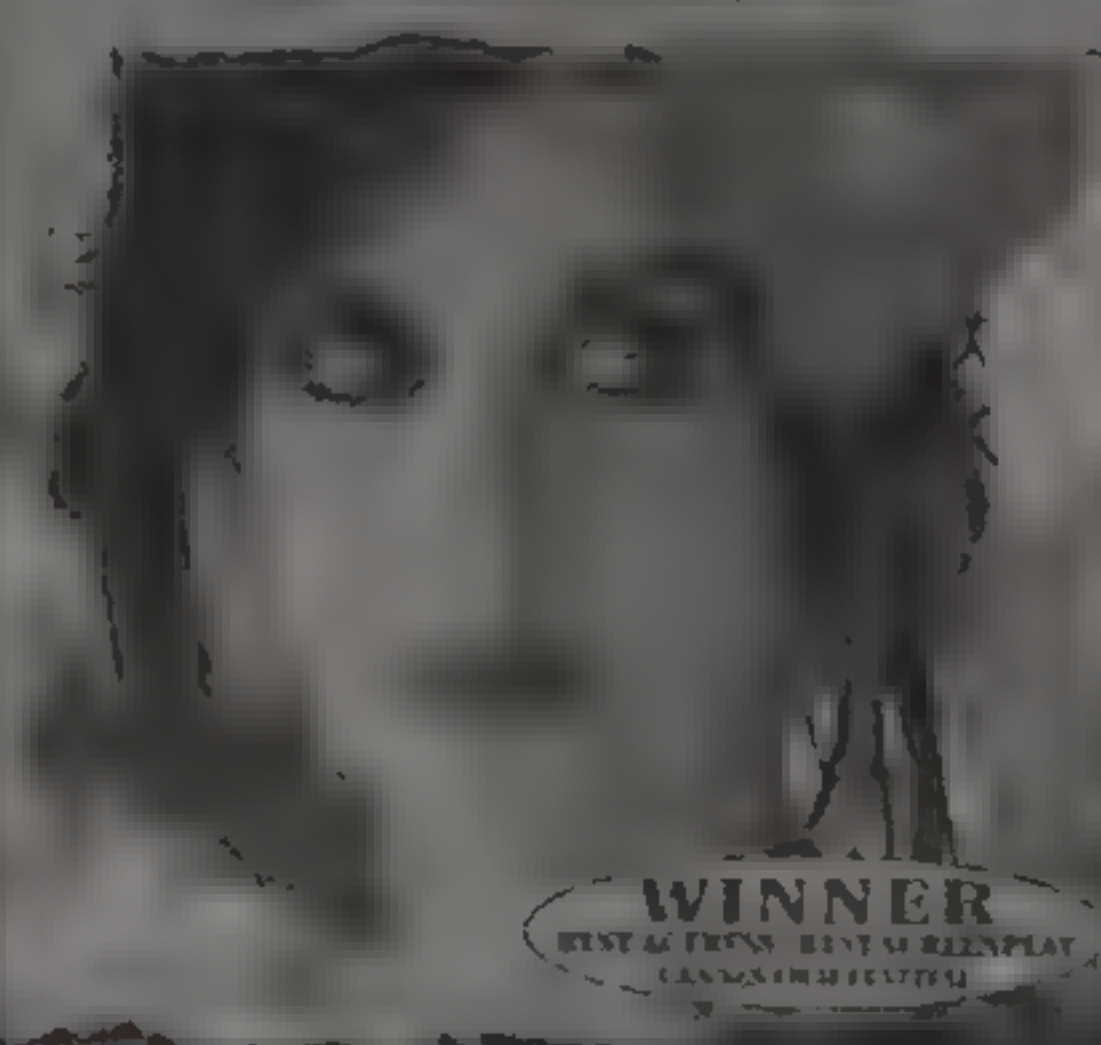
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—Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE



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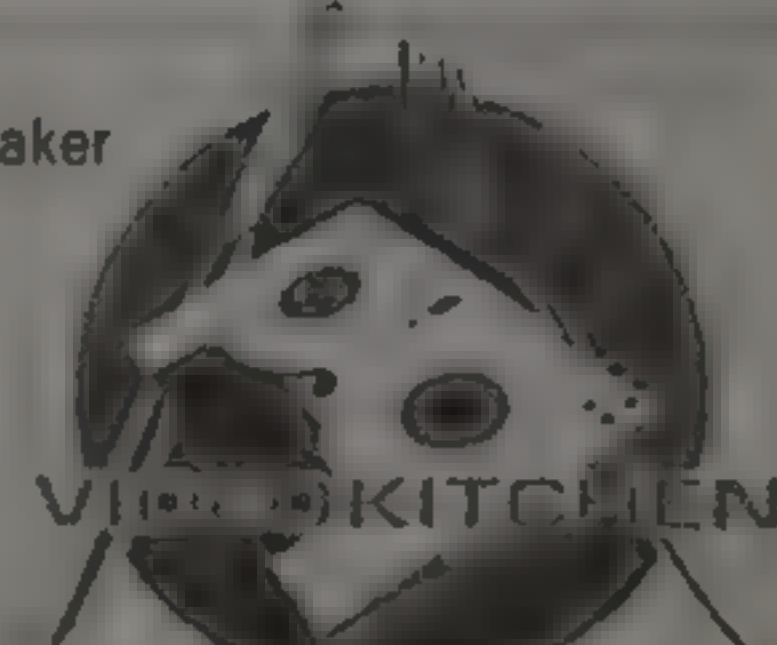
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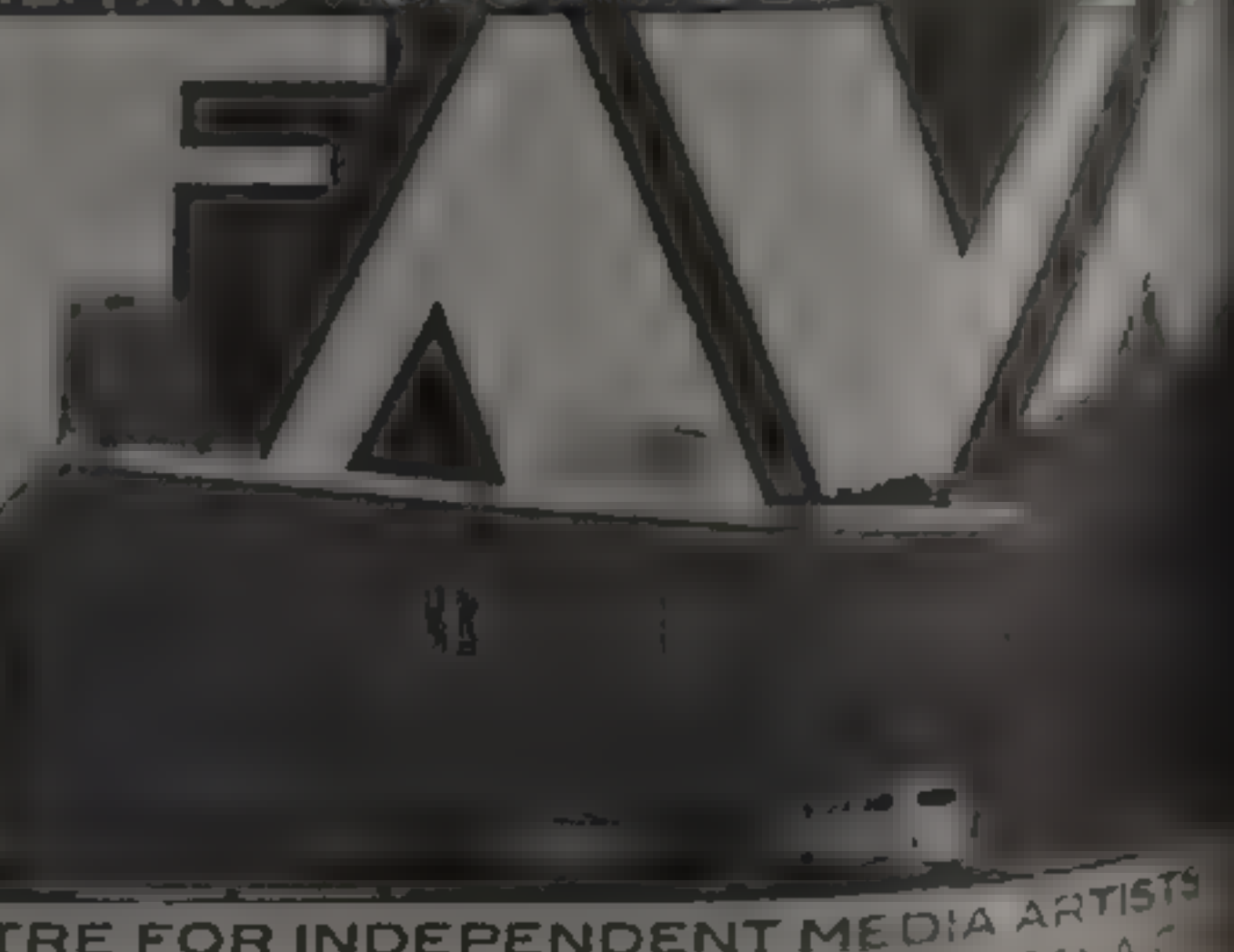
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THE DEPARTED (18A, coarse language, violence) Daily 1:05, 4:00, 7:25

TRAILER PARK BOYS: THE MOVIE (18A, coarse language, substance abuse) Daily 2:00, 4:10, 7:00, 9:35

JET LI'S FEARLESS (PG, violence, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:30, 4:30, 7:15, 9:40

MAN OF THE YEAR (PG, coarse language) Daily 4:40, 9:30

STEP UP (PG) Sat-Sun 10:55, Daily 1:40, 7:20

BARNYARD (G) Sat-Sun 11:10, Daily 1:25

FLICKA (G) Sat-Sun 11:00, Daily 1:50, 4:25

LET'S GO TO PRISON (14A, coarse language) Daily 2:05, 4:55, 7:40, 9:55

THE GUARDIAN (PG, coarse language, not recommended for young children) Daily 4:25, 7:35

OPEN SEASON (G) Daily 1:10, 3:10, 5:00, 7:10, 9:25

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE (14A, coarse language, mature themes) Daily 2:10, 4:35, 7:05, 9:45

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH (PG, coarse language) Daily 7:20, 10:00

THE MARINE (14A, violence) Daily 1:45, 9:50

THE ILLUSIONIST (PG, mature themes) Daily 4:05, 8:50

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (PG) Daily 1:35, 4:00, 6:55, 9:20

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST (PG, frightening scenes, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:20, 4:20, 7:30

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THE DEPARTED (18A, coarse language, violence) Daily 12:45, 3:45, 6:45, 9:45

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JET LI'S FEARLESS (PG, violence, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:45, 4:45, 7:10, 9:25

MAN OF THE YEAR (PG, coarse language) Daily 1:35, 4:30, 7:00, 9:35

STEP UP (PG) Daily 1:40, 4:25, 6:55, 9:20

BARNYARD (G) Daily 1:50

FLICKA (G) Daily 1:05, 3:05

LET'S GO TO PRISON (14A, coarse language) Daily 1:30, 4:20, 7:25, 9:40

THE GUARDIAN (PG, coarse language, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:05, 3:50, 6:40, 9:30

OPEN SEASON (G) Daily 1:10, 3:10, 5:05, 7:05, 9:10

THE GRUDGE 2 (14A, frightening scenes) Daily 4:40, 9:45

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH (PG, coarse language) Daily 2:00, 7:15

THE MARINE (14A, violence) Daily 6:10, 7:40, 9:55

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (PG) Daily 4:35, 7:20, 9:50

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST (PG, frightening scenes, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:00, 4:15, 7:30

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THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:50, 4:00, 7:15, 10:10; Sun 12:50, 4:00, 7:15, Mon 4:00, 7:15, 10:10

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG, not recommended for young children) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:00, 3:50, 7:00, 9:30, Sun 1:00, 3:50, 7:00, Mon 3:50, 7:00, 9:30

CASINO ROYALE (14A, violence) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:00, 3:15, 6:30, 9:40; Sun 12:00, 3:15, 6:30; Mon 3:15, 6:30, 9:40

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:10, 4:10, 7:25, 10:15, Sun 1:10, 4:10, 7:25, Mon 4:10, 7:25, 10:15

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:20, 4:20, 6:45, 9:15, Sun 1:20, 4:20, 6:45, Mon 4:20, 6:45, 9:15

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for children) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:30, 3:40, 6:50, 10:00; Sun 12:30, 3:40, 6:50, Mon 3:40, 6:50, 10:00

BLOOD DIAMOND (14A, violence, disturbing content) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:10, 3:25, 6:35, 9:50; Sun 12:10, 3:25, 6:35, Mon 3:25, 6:35, 9:50

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (14A) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:40, 4:30, 8:30; Sun 12:40, 6:25, Mon 4:30, 8:30

APOCALYPTO (14A, gory scenes, brutal violence) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:20, 3:30, 6:40, 9:55; Sun 12:20, 3:30, 6:40, Mon 3:30, 6:40, 9:55

CLAREVIEW

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NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG, not recommended for young children) Fri 2:00, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20; Sat Tue-Thu 2:00, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20; Sun 2:00, 4:40, 7:00; Mon 4:40, 7:00, 9:20

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Fri 1:50, 4:30, 7:30, 10:00, Sat Tue-Thu 1:50, 4:30, 7:30, 10:00; Sun 1:50, 4:30, 6:55, Mon 4:30, 7:30, 10:00

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Fri 1:15, 3:50, 6:50, 9:25; Sat Tue-Thu 1:15, 3:50, 6:50, 9:25, Sun 1:15, 3:50, 6:50, Mon 3:50, 6:50, 9:25

ERAGON (PG, violence, not recommended for young children) Fri 1:40, 4:20, 7:20, 9:45; Sat Tue-Thu 1:40, 4:20, 7:20, 9:45; Sun 1:40, 4:20, 6:40; Mon 4:20, 7:20, 9:45

APOCALYPTO (14A, gory scenes, brutal violence) Fri 9:35, Sat Mon-Thu 9:35, Sun

CASINO ROYALE (14A, violence) Fri 12:45, 3:40, 6:35, Sat-Sun Tue-Thu 12:45, 3:40, 6:35, Mon 3:40, 6:35

WE ARE MARSHALL (PG) Fri 4:10, 7:15, 9:50; Sat Mon-Thu 4:10, 7:15, 9:50; Sun 4:10, 6:50

HAPPY FEET (G) Fri 1:30; Sat-Sun Tue-Thu 1:30, Mon

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (14A) Fri 1:00, 4:30, 8:00; Sat Tue-Thu 1:00, 4:30, 8:00, Sun 1:00, 6:30, Mon 4:30, 8:00

BLOOD DIAMOND (14A, violence, disturbing content) Fri 12:40, 3:30, 6:40, 9:30; Sat Tue-Thu 12:40, 3:30, 6:40, 9:30, Sun 12:40, 3:30, 6:40; Mon 3:30, 6:40, 9:30

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for children) Fri 1:10, 4:00, 6:45, 9:40; Sat Tue-Thu 1:10, 4:00, 6:45, 9:40, Sun 1:10, 4:00, 6:45, Mon 4:00, 6:45, 9:40

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Fri 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7:05, 9:15, Sat Tue-Thu 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7:05, 9:15; Sun 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7:05; Mon 4:50, 7:05, 9:15

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD (14A, no passes) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:30, 4:30, 8:30, Sun 2:30, 6:30; Mon 4:30, 8:30

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:45, 3:25, 6:20, 9:00; Sun 12:45, 3:25, 6:20; Mon 3:25, 6:20, 9:00

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:40, 2:15, 10:10; Sun 12:40, 4:20, 7:15, Mon 4:20, 7:15, 10:10

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50; Sun 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:30; Mon 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

ERAGON (PG, violence, not recommended for young children, no passes) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:30, 4:10, 7:10, 9:55, Sun 1:30, 4:10, 7:10, Mon 4:10, 7:10, 9:55

BLOOD DIAMOND (14A, violence, disturbing content) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:50, 3:50, 7:00, 10:05, Sun 12:50, 3:50, 7:00; Mon 3:50, 7:00, 10:05

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for children) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:35, 3:45, 6:45, 10:15, Sun 12:35, 3:45, 6:45, Mon 3:45, 6:45, 10:15

APOCALYPTO (14A, gory scenes, brutal violence) Fri-Sat Mon-Thu 9:15

CASINO ROYALE (14A, violence) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:15, 3:30, 6:40, 10:00, Sun 12:15, 3:30, 6:40, Mon 3:30, 6:40, 10:00

HAPPY FEET (G) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:00, 3:55, 6:30, Mon 3:55, 6:30

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KABUL EXPRESS (14A) Fri Mon 6:45, Sat Tue-Thu 1:00, 6:45, Sun 1:00

BAABUL (PG) Fri Mon 9:00, Sat Tue-Thu 3:15, 9:00, Sun 3:15

FLUSHED AWAY (G) Fri Mon 7:10, Sat Tue-Thu 1:15, 3:25, 7:10, Sun 1:15, 3:25

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BHAGAM BHAG (STC) Fri Mon 6:30, 8:45, Sat Tue-Thu 3:30, 6:30, 8:45, Sun 3:30

THE HISTORY BOYS (14A, coarse language, mature themes) Fri Mon 7:15, 9:45, Sat Tue-Thu 1:40, 4:10, 7:15, 9:45, Sun 1:40, 4:10

WESH IGRAM (14A) Fri Mon 7:20, 9:35, Sat Tue-Thu 1:50, 4:15, 7:20, 9:35, Sun 1:50, 4:15

STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG) Fri Mon 6:40, 9:20; Sat 1:05, 3:50, 6:40, 9:20; Sun 1:05, 3:50; Tue-Thu 1:10, 4:00, 6:40, 9:20

THE QUEEN (PG) Fri-Sat Mon-Thu 6:50, 9:25

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (G) Sat-Sun 1:25, 3:40, Tue-Thu 1:25, 3:50

DEJA VU (14A) Mon 6:15, 9:40, Tue-Thu 1:05, 3:45, 6:15

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THE HOLIDAY (PG, Not recommended for young children) Daily 6:45, 9:15

THE NATIVITY (PG) Daily 4:50

HAPPY FEET (G) Daily 12:40, 2:50

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Daily 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00

ERAGON (PG, Not recommended for young children, Violence) Daily 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:20

ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Daily 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Daily 1:00, 3:25, 7:10, 9:20

ERAGON (PG, violence, not recommended for young children) Daily 1:10, 3:35, 6:55, 9:25

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for young children) Daily 7:00, 9:30

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Daily 1:00, 3:30, 7:05, 9:30

HAPPY FEET (G) Daily 1:05, 3:20

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PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Daily 8:55, 9:10, Sat, Tue, Thu 1:55

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG, not recommended for young children) Daily 7:00, 9:20, Sat, Tue, Thu 2:00

ERAGON (PG, violence, not recommended for young children) Daily 7:05, 9:00, Sat, Tue, Thu 2:05

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) Daily 7:10, 9:05; Sat, Tue, Thu 2:10

THE HOLIDAY (PG, not recommended for young children) Daily 6:50, 9:15

HAPPY FEET (G) Sat, Tue, Thu 1:50

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DECK THE HALLS (PG) Fri Tue-Thu 4:15, 7:10, 10:00; Sat 1:30, 4:15, 7:10, 10:00; Sun 1:30, 4:15, 7:10; Mon 7:10, 10:00

THE PRESTIGE (14A) Fri Tue-Thu 3:50, 6:45, 9:45, Sat 1:10, 3:50, 6:45, 9:45; Sun 1:10, 3:50, 6:45, Mon 6:45, 9:45

TRAILER PARK BOYS: THE MOVIE (18A, coarse language, substance abuse) Fri Tue-Thu 4:00, 6:30, 9:15, Sat 1:15, 4:00, 6:30, 9:15, Sun 1:15, 4:00, 6:30; Mon 6:30, 9:15

FLICKA (G) Fri Tue-Thu 4:20, 7:20, Sat-Sun 1:40, 4:20, 7:20; Mon 7:20

LET'S GO TO PRISON (14A, coarse language) Fri Tue-Thu 4:45, 7:15, 9:30, Sat 1:50, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30; Sun 1:50, 4:45, 7:15, Mon 7:15, 9:30

OPEN SEASON (G) Fri Tue-Thu 4:30, 7:00, 9:20, Sat 1:45, 4:30, 7:00, 9:20; Sun 1:45, 4:30, 7:00, Mon 7:00, 9:20

THE ILLUSIONIST (PG, mature themes) Fri-Sat Mon-Thu 9:50

THE GUARDIAN (PG, coarse language, not recommended for young children) Fri Tue-Thu 3:45, 6:40, 9:40; Sat 1:00, 3:45, 6:40, 9:40; Sun 1:00, 3:45, 6:40; Mon 6:40, 9:40

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NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG, not recommended for young children, no passes) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 11:50, 2:15, 4:50, 7:30, 10:30; Sun 11:50, 2:15, 4:50, 7:30; Mon 4:50, 7:30, 10:30

WE ARE MARSHALL (PG, no passes) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:10, 4:20, 7:20, 10:15, Sun 1:10, 4:20, 7:20, Mon 4:20, 7:20, 10:15

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (14A, no passes) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:00, 4:30, 8:30, Sun 3:00, 6:45, Mon 4:30, 8:30

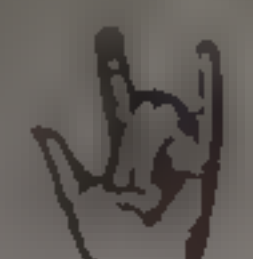
ROCKY BALBOA (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 12:25, 2:55, 5:30, 8:00, 10:40; Sun 12:25, 2:55, 5:30, 8:00, Mon 5:30, 8:00, 10:40

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG) Fri-Sat Tue-Thu 1:30, 4:10, 7:15,

Brilliant, bleak *Lazarescu* bares bottom-of-the-barrel health care

BRAND GIBSON / www.vueweekly.com

Indie Sundance favourites can be cookie-cut and left to rise into overblown whimsy in any State, Garden or otherwise. Japanese horror films spawned J-film copies: grudging ripoffs, dark, watery spinoffs and other ringers left to haunt the video shelves.



THIS ROCKS

But there's something genuine about social realist films—a sensibility so particular, a genius loci so culturally specific, that it can't be franchised out.

On the face of it, *The Death of Mr Lazarescu* seems a work that the Dardenne brothers, transplanted to Romania, would make. The camera wavers faintly, as though itching to break into a run after its protagonist. But the man we're plodding after is Dante Remus Lazarescu, 63, on a slow descent into a private hell

DVD

NOW AVAILABLE

THE DEATH OF MR LAZARESCU

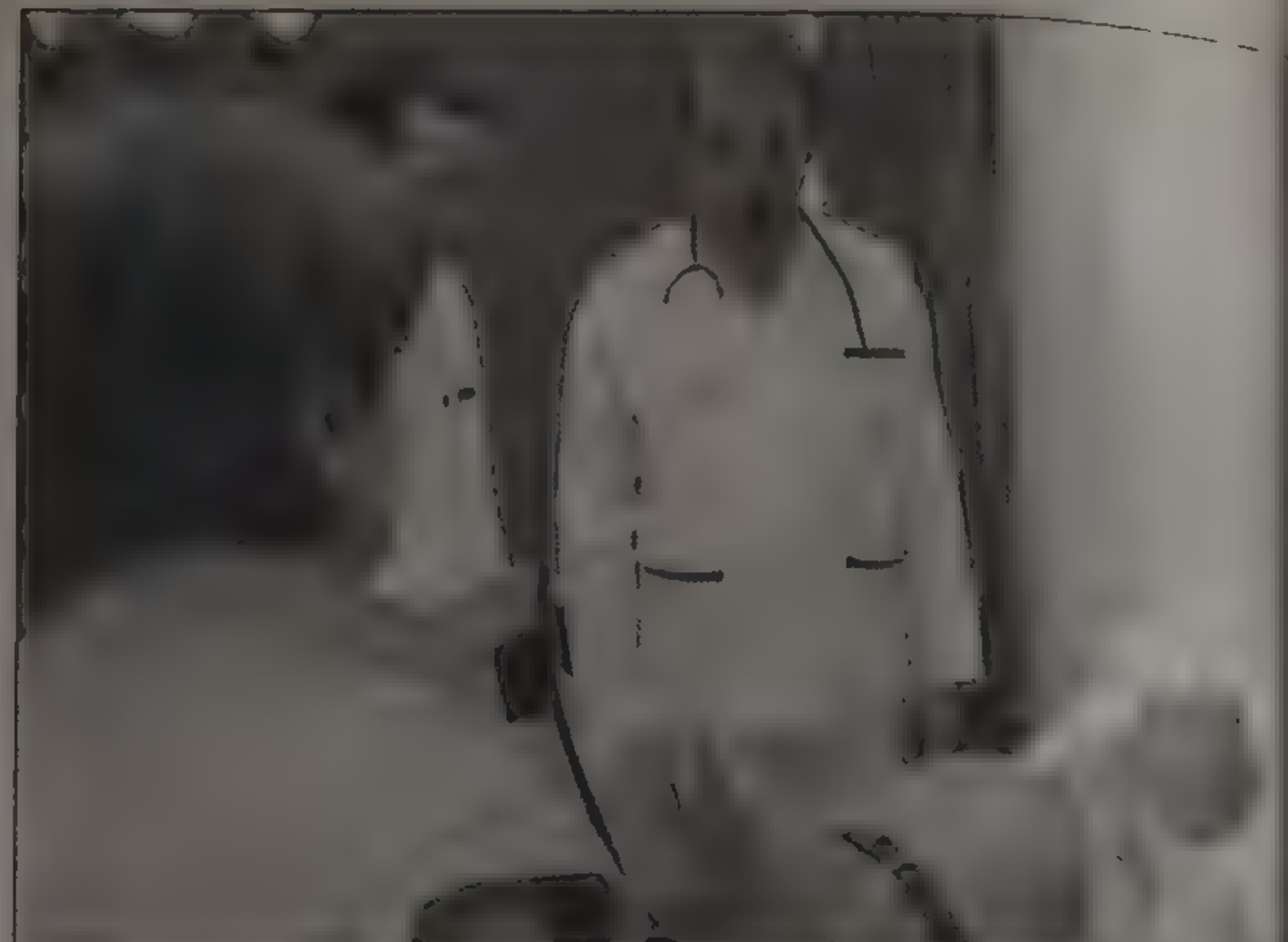
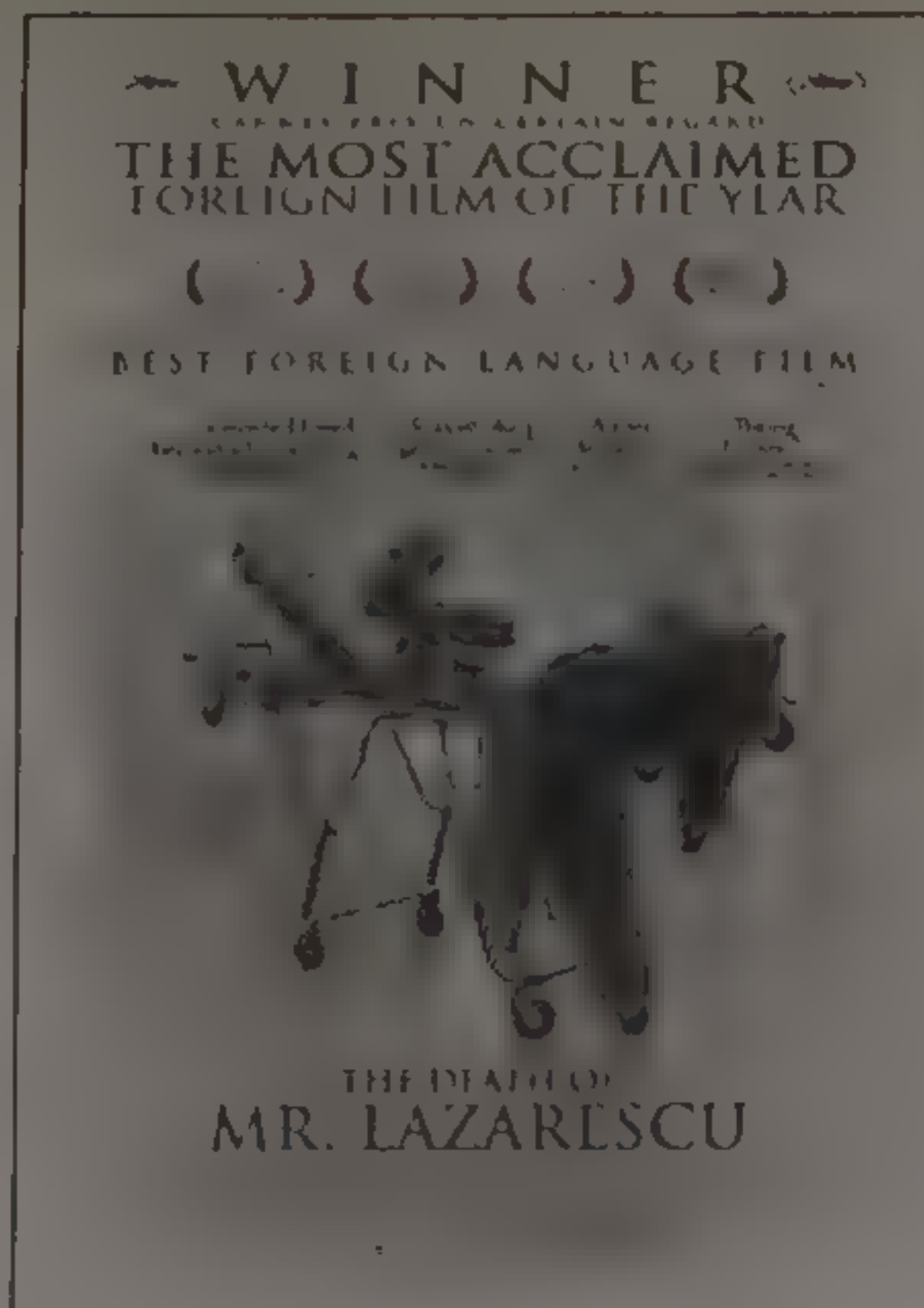
DIRECTED BY CRISTI PUIU

WRITTEN BY PUIU, RAZVAN RADULESCU

STARRING ION FISCUTEANU, LUMINITA GHEORGHIU

thanks to Bucharest's public health-care system.

In his apartment, among his cats, the bespectacled Mr Lazarescu (Ion Fiscuteanu), a grey toque capping his grizzled face, shuffles around in slippers, faded jeans and a jail-striped shirt before calling the doctor. He's had a headache for four days and been throwing up. His 40-something neighbours aren't too concerned—they're sure that his drinking is catching up to him. But soon after he can't stand up and is vomiting bile, they call the ambulance.



BILLED A "BLACK COMEDY," this won't tickle your funny bone. It's a galling odyssey through bureaucracy, exhausted compassion and overworked, understaffed hospitals—only ambulance attendant Mioara (Luminita Gheorgiu) has time for the dying man.

Director Cristi Puiu offers an unflinching stare at Mr Lazarescu's final hours: harried doctors preach to him or neglect him between self-anesthetizing wisecracks, and the patient's condition spirals away as he's shunted from hospital to hospital.

Cold white corridors and green-curtained waiting rooms are suffused with wan lighting. Flickers of warmth—two doctors who intersperse

their busy rounds with romantic words to each other; Mioara catching up with a friend during the CT scan—stoke the embers in the ashes of this dim, grave world making its bleary-eyed rounds. Even after Mr Lazarescu's condition has been diagnosed, a group of doctors offers doses of vicious disdain.

The DVD has an interview with Puiu, partly influenced to make the film (the first in a planned series set in Bucharest's suburbs, examining brotherly and not-so-brotherly love) by his own suffering of Mallory-Weiss syndrome, a vessel-bursting condition that caused him to vomit blood and led to a bout of hypochondria. Another

fount of inspiration was the true story of a man who was rejected by six hospitals and left to die on the street.

Mr Lazarescu's demise is not more comfortable. This deathly film crafted with such ease that it comes appallingly alive. A slowly suffocating masterly work of social realism that shrouds you in a melancholy look at mortality, this is a damning indictment and scathing exposé.

If Puiu's film doesn't help to reflect Romania's health care, it can at least make us all take a closer look at our public life-support system that should be there for us with decency and dignity when we stumble into the shadows of sickness. **V**

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January 4, 07



Politic Live learns the art of Adaptation in recording woes

ETER FAUST / ministerfaust.blogspot.com

So many of history's greatest artists reached the heights of fame because some benefactors put them there.

It if you fire up the ol' Alternateory Scanner and search under words "Accident + Error + Scam," you can scroll for years through the lives of would've-been-titans who, dropped dead halfway through writing the manuscript that would've been the world's finest novel, or the composers whose memories and melodies were erased by the unexpected meeting of skulls and speeding cars, or the musicians whose potential greatness was terminated by the intersection of their talent and a producer's charlatanism.

More over that list long enough and you might find the name **Politic Live**, arguably E-Town's finest hip-hop band. If the band manages to get that list and up into the ionosphere of celebrity, it'll be due to skill, will, a clear conscience and a stunning

you're a true E-Town hip-head or a listener of CJSR's Saturday night *Urban Hang Suite* hosted by frontman Young Mav, you may not have heard of the band. But if you've seen Politic Live on stage or heard their brand new (not-new/almost-in-birth) record *Adaptation*, then you know why these young men have some of the MC attention that

PREVIEW

FRI, DEC 22 (8 PM)
HIP HOP FOR HUNGER
POLITIC LIVE
WITH TOUCH, OOOZEELÁ, K-RIZ, PROVELI PARAGON,
DETAILS, DJ NATO, FRESHLY SQUEEZED, SONNY
GRIMES, TWIST, G-UNIT SOUND
STARLITE ROOM, \$8 WITH A FOOD DONATION

has so far mostly been going to Edmonton's Cadence Weapon. Because they—and their new album featuring guests such as Souljah Fyah's Janaya Ellis, songstress Oozeela and MC JJ Heaven—are *freaking great*.

So how was it that *Adaptation* came within hairs of being naturally selected-out when survival goes only to the fittest (or the dirtiest)?

"THE PRODUCERS approached us in 2004 about producing *Adaptation*," explains Young Mav with Bigga Nolte during our conversation at CJSR studios. One of the producers in question had mixed a track on the band's debut album *Notoriety*, and on that strength—and the business plan presented to them—Mav and cohorts Nolte and Dirt Gritie eagerly accepted the offer.

After having been frustrated by working with too many producers on other projects, and after receiving a \$5 000 Alberta Foundation for the Arts grant ("It's government money, so you don't want to mess around with that!" says Mav), Politic Live was about to discover the terrifying gap between promise and product.

"It just seemed like the moment they got [the money], they were showing up late for studio sessions, they were sometimes cancelling five minutes before sessions when I didn't have a cellphone—and there I was waiting outside the studio."

Promises of improvement made no difference, and although Politic Live had a video on MuchMusic and MTV Canada (Mav: "It got a lot of rotation—it even charted!"), the absence of a finished album meant that their independently-financed \$9 000 music video for "The Matinee" could not do its primary job: sell albums.

More deadlines died. The producers insisted their fee was insufficient, despite having originally named their own price. The grant agencies demanded results. The band wrote supplicating letters of extension to the AFA, not realizing at that time that they could have switched producers.

"They ended up making us miss our second deadline," says Mav. "One of the producers moved to Montreal without telling us. [We were] stuck three weeks before the album was supposed to be presented to the AFA before our final deadline, and we had nothing to show for it. Tracks weren't even done, and the other guy was saying he was too busy and we should take the project and work with someone else, and if we lost the

CONTINUED ON PAGE A1

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Rich Hope has got the one-man blues

By / edna@vuvweekly.com

Rich Hope has been dragging his guitar along through the music scene since the late 1970s. He released his first solo album, *Rich Hope & his Evil*, in 1998, before joining the group John Ford & the Wailers as a guitar player and song-

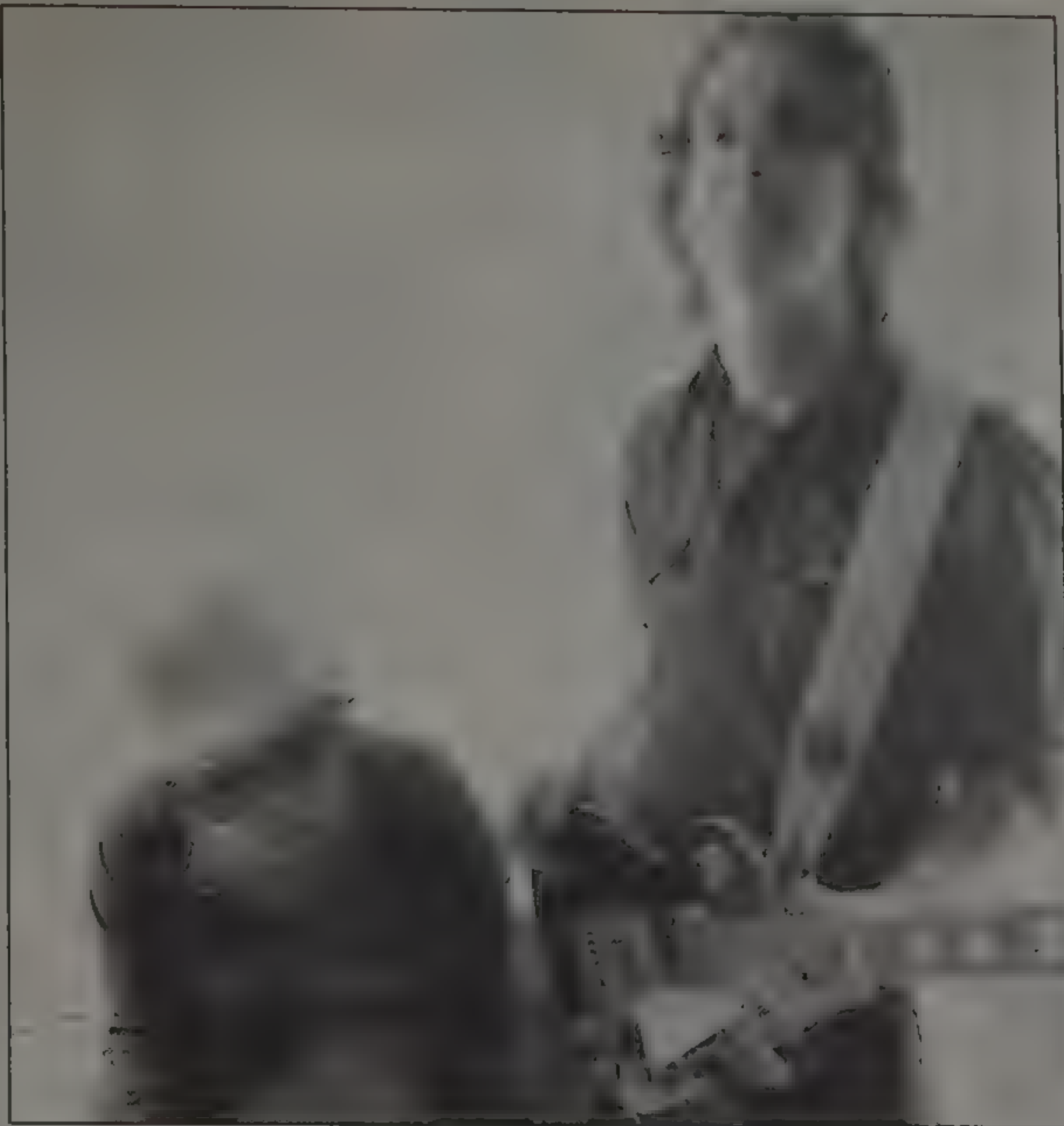
writer, burning back and forth across the landscape for a few years, until it came to an end and Hope started recording another solo set, this time bringing together a collection of tracks bridging the gap between his earlier songs—he draws inspiration for one of them from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*—and a gut-wrenching blues grind.

Hope explains that the variance in his music is natural, since the album was written in two parts. The electric stuff came first, during the time when he was in John Ford & the Wailers, and he recorded back and forth with the other members. While the initial songs didn't particularly feel of John Ford, Hope dusted his tracks off when it came time to release his solo career and he laid down in a friend's studio.

At the same time, though, Hope has been listening to a lot of one-chord, trance-inducing Mississippi blues, and he started fooling around with the sound on his electric guitar. After transposing newer songs to the electric, he brought a drummer and into the studio and captured most of the tunes in one five-hour

session. Releasing the album in 2005, Hope has been playing around his home in Vancouver, downsizing his band to a duo.

"At the moment I'm not using a drummer at all," he explains. "It's all about economics, because touring is expensive and I try to make it any way I can, and partially it's because I really like the sound right now without a bass player. I really need one, because I'm playing



PREVIEW SAT, DEC 23 (4 PM)
RICH HOPE
BLACK DOG, FREE

a lot of one-chord blues and I can hold down the root note with my thumb and pick the rest of them with my fingers. I just really like the freedom that I have on the guitar."

WHILE HOPE NORMALLY grinds out his bawdy blues style in the guitar and drums format, he'll be leaving his drummer at home and performing solo when he plays here at the Black Dog. That's not because he felt a burning need to flex his singer/songwriter muscles—although he does do that once a month or so around Vancouver. This time out, though, Edmonton is not

just one of many tour stops for Hope. He grew up here and he's venturing back this way for the first time in 14 years to visit his relatives for Christmas.

"I was gonna come in the spring, but some of the other dates on the tour didn't work out, and it just became this huge, long journey to come to Edmonton," Hope says, remembering the last time he tried to get out here. "So we just postponed it and I thought, 'well, I'm coming to see my relatives for Christmas, so I'll play a show while I'm there.'"

Despite stripping things down from electric to acoustic for the show, though, Hope says that the gig won't be all that different.

"It's kind of the same," he laughs, "because I'll just stomp on the floor with my boot." ▽

POLITIC LIVE

ESTABLISHED THIRD PAGE AT

grant, then we lost the grant, and he didn't apologize for what he'd done."

And after weeks crumbled into months, the producers, despite having received partial payment, never turned over all elements of work-product. Finally Politic Live moved on, but not without having lessons scrawled across their skin like burns.

The main lesson, says Mav, is to get a contract no matter what, and no matter with whom.

"Everyone always makes that mistake from saying, 'Oh, they're my friend, or I've known them for so long, or they know someone I know so they wouldn't screw me over' ... It could be my mom or my little sister, but contracts have to be in place. To me that's a sad thing because you end up working with people you've known for years who take offence to [being told to sign a contract], but I'm not gonna go through that again."

Lesson number two? Set concrete deadlines in the contract with financial penalties for violations.

FORTUNATELY FOR BOTH band and audience, *Adaptation* was worth every migraine. Politic Live's lyricism, fused with the power of their new production team, have crafted a CD that deserves to be in constant, intimate congress with your sound system.

The reggae-inflected "Executive

Summary" featuring Janaya Ellis's sultriness opens with bass-and-horns gravity that'll spin you into immediate orbit; "Video Light" laments the exploitation of all the girls and women in the industry's parade of hip hop "viddy-hoes." ▽

And then there's "Travels with Akeem," featuring Congolese MC JJ Heaven. Born from the bassline of the Wailers' "Concrete Jungle," the song is based on Young Mav's many encounters with highly educated immigrants working as taxi drivers in our Great White North of opportunity and the boundless frontiers of job-rich Alberta.

"As our city is booming," says PL's lead MC, "there's a bigger divide between the rich and the poor, and no one seems to be paying attention to that. We're going to get to the point where all of this is going to collapse. I have plenty of friends whose parents came from another country and their education is not recognized [here] and they become cab drivers, janitors, and yet we're neglecting that."

Fortunately the band doesn't leave its conscience as mere consciousness, as this Christmas marks Politic Live's fifth annual Hip Hop for Hunger.

Despite the irony of the name, the event raises food and funds for Edmonton's Food Bank while electrifying the crowd with a loaded roster of performers that includes Politic Live themselves. Especially when hip hop has so many negative connotations, E-Town is blessed to have a band of such musical magnificence

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Specialty Chocolates, Ice Cream, Pastries, Cakes, etc.FOUR ROOMS
Julie Mahedron; 9pmTHE IVORY CLUB
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Specialty Chocolates, Ice Cream, Pastries, Cakes, etc.NORTH GLENORA HALL
ed by the Wild Rose Old Time Fiddlers Society; 7-10pm

O'BRYNE'S The Marco Claveria Project; 9:30pm, no cover

ROXY The Christmas Carol Project
Featuring Bill Bourne, Maria Dunn, Kevin Cook, Al Brant, Terry Morrison, Tom Roschikov, Dale Ladouceur, and Ken Brown; 8pm, tickets available at Theatre Network 453-2440SIDETRACK CAFE
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URBAN LOUNGE September Stone, Silver, Misses Missile; 9pm-2am, \$5 (door)

WILD WEST SALOON Billy Ringo

THU DEC 21 DJ

BILLY BOB'S LOUNGE Farapark
Folkies meet

BLACK DOG FREEHOUSE DJs spin on two levels

BUDDY'S Wet underwear contest with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy

ESMERALDA'S Big and Rich Thursday; top 40, country

FILTHY McNASTY'S Punk Rock Bingo with DJ S.W.A.G.

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Specialty Chocolates, Ice Cream, Pastries, Cakes, etc.OVERTIME BOILER AND TAP-ROOM SOUTH
Retro to New classic rock R&B, a man and dance with DJ Mikee; 9pm-2am, no coverRED STAR
remmie Fatale rock, pop, hip hop with DJ KellyTHE ROOST
Gorgeous, featuring hostess Dr. Leaux Tronic, Drag Kings and Queens, burlesque and rotating game shows, bands upstairs monthlySTANDSTILL
Specialty Chocolates, Ice Cream, Pastries, Cakes, etc.VELVET UNDERGROUND
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MUSIC WEEKLY

WUNDERBAR Kelly and Ian Sweet
Brit and punk with Phillip and Bogner

FRI
LIVE MUSIC

FRI LIVE MUSIC

FRI DEC 22

BLUE CHAIR CAFE Nora Bumanis, 8pm, \$12 (adv)/\$15 (door)

CASINO EDMONTON Kory Wlos (country/rock)

K-Riz, Povel Paragon, Details and Emcee E, 8pm, \$8 (with non-perishable food item)/\$10 (with non-perishable food item)

URBAN LOUNGE Mourning Wood, 9pm-2am, \$5 (door)

VELVET UNDERGROUND
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WILD WEST SALOON Billy Ringo

CLASSICAL

FRI DEC 22 CLASSICAL

WINSPEAR CENTRE Caroling and Radiothon Christmas concert and sing-along in support of the Christmas Bureau of Edmonton; Dr.



PREVUE / SAT, DEC 23 (9 PM) / FESTIVUS FOR THE REST OF US / VELVET UNDERGROUND / FREE

Apparently there will be a Festivus Pole, the traditional airing of grievances and a shitty gift exchange where you get to swap your crappy gift for another. No word yet on feats of strength or Festivus miracles.

CASINO YELLOWHEAD

FEVER NIGHT CLUB Global Fridays; NAS (CD release party)

FOUR ROOMS

HULBERT'S

THE IVORY CLUB Live Dueling

JAMMERS PUB Country rock band

JEFFREY'S CAFE Anna Beaumont's Christmas Concert; \$15

JEKYL AND HYDE PUB Headwind

NEW CITY Hot Panda, City Streets, The Last Deal; no minors, 9pm (door); \$10 (door only)

NEW CITY

ON THE ROCKS

OVERTIME BOILER AND TAP-ROOM SOUTH

RED STAR

THE ROOST

STANDSTILL

VELVET UNDERGROUND

WILD WEST SALOON

WUNDERBAR

Y AFTERHOURS

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ESMERALDA'S DJ Jimmy Friday; 8pm (door)

FUNKY BUDDHA (WHYTE AVE)
Top tracks, rock, retro with DJ OamianGAS PUMP
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HALO Mod Club, indie rock, new wave, Brit pop, and '60s soul with DJ Blue Jay, DJ Travvy D; no cover before 10pm, \$5 (after 10pm)

LEVEL 2 LOUNGE Hypnotic Friday
Breakbeat, house, progressive and electro with Groovy Curvy, DJ Fuuze

NEW CITY Das Oontz Techno, industrial, trance with DJ Dervish and the Groovinator; 9pm (door)

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8pm
THE IVORY CLUB
Pianos, no cover, 9pm

JAMMERS PUB

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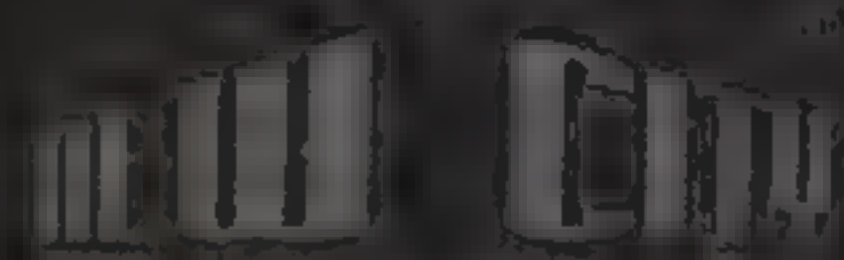
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FRIDAY
DECEMBER
22nd

CityStreets
Hot Panda
The Last Deal

\$10



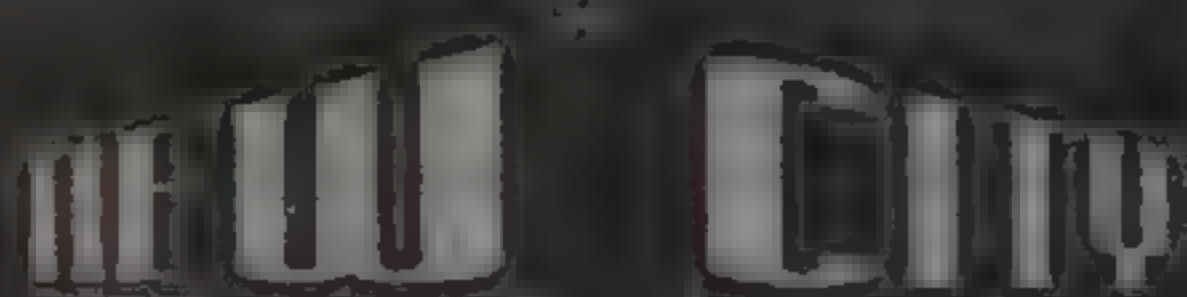
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Hot Panda is all ready to bear down on Edmonton's rock royalty

RAY / david@vuvueweekly.com

The three members of **Hot Panda** in attendance for our interview seem mildly worried. "I don't know where Keith [Olsen, bassist] is. I called him, though," says lead singer/guitarist Chris Connelly. "Maybe he's dead," offers accordionist/keyboardist/guitarist Mike Robertson. "No, I talked to him, he went and had breakfast already, he's alive," says Connelly. "He had the worst show ever last night," offers drummer Maghan Campbell as explanation for Robertson's pessimism. "First of all, it was, it was a hardcore punk show." "Ah," interrupts Connelly. "Somebody brought their kids, and this six-year-old had a mohawk. That's how it was." "Ah, so that's not really our fault, and then Keith got a concussion," continues Campbell. "There was his door, or something, near the stage, and he jumped up—Keith gets into it—and just drilled his head into the top of the door frame, then fell off the stage. I didn't think he was going to make it, but he popped right back up." "I wouldn't even let us look at it, though," says Connelly. "He thought it was going to be too bad, so he just walked away." "Ah, and then he fell down and broke your guitar," continues Campbell.



PREVIEW FRI, DEC 22 (8:30 PM)
HOT PANDA
WITH THE LAST DEAL, THE CITY STREETS
NEW CITY, \$10

walked in about 10 minutes into the interview, head seemingly no worse for wear—in stride.

"That's why we have backup songs," explains Robertson, nonchalantly. "Sometimes you just have to play 'Kumbaya' while you fix things. I actually think we should write a song where you play the tuning notes, so we can tune stuff, but people will think it's just another song."

The unrestrained energy that causes the band's problems and the sheer ingenuity that solves them are no doubt big reasons why the quartet is starting to get comparisons to Edmonton's rock royalty, a place where they

fit right in: their fuzz rock stomp fits somewhere between the pared-down shudder of the Twin Fangs and the effusive indulgence of the Wet Secrets, and their live show is as ballsy as Whitey Houston's, not only audacious enough to, say, rip through a cover of *The Jungle Book's* "King of the Swingers," but tight enough to make it sound like it should have been a garage rock song in the first place.

"It sort of seems like, in the last little while, most of Edmonton's, like, best rock bands have sort of been on hiatus," explains Connelly.

"Yeah, or swallowed up by Shout Out," pipes in Olsen.

"Yeah, so I think it's ripe for someone else to just sort of step in there," continues Connelly, who adds the next part jokingly, even if he's got no real reason to. "And, really, who better than us?" ▽



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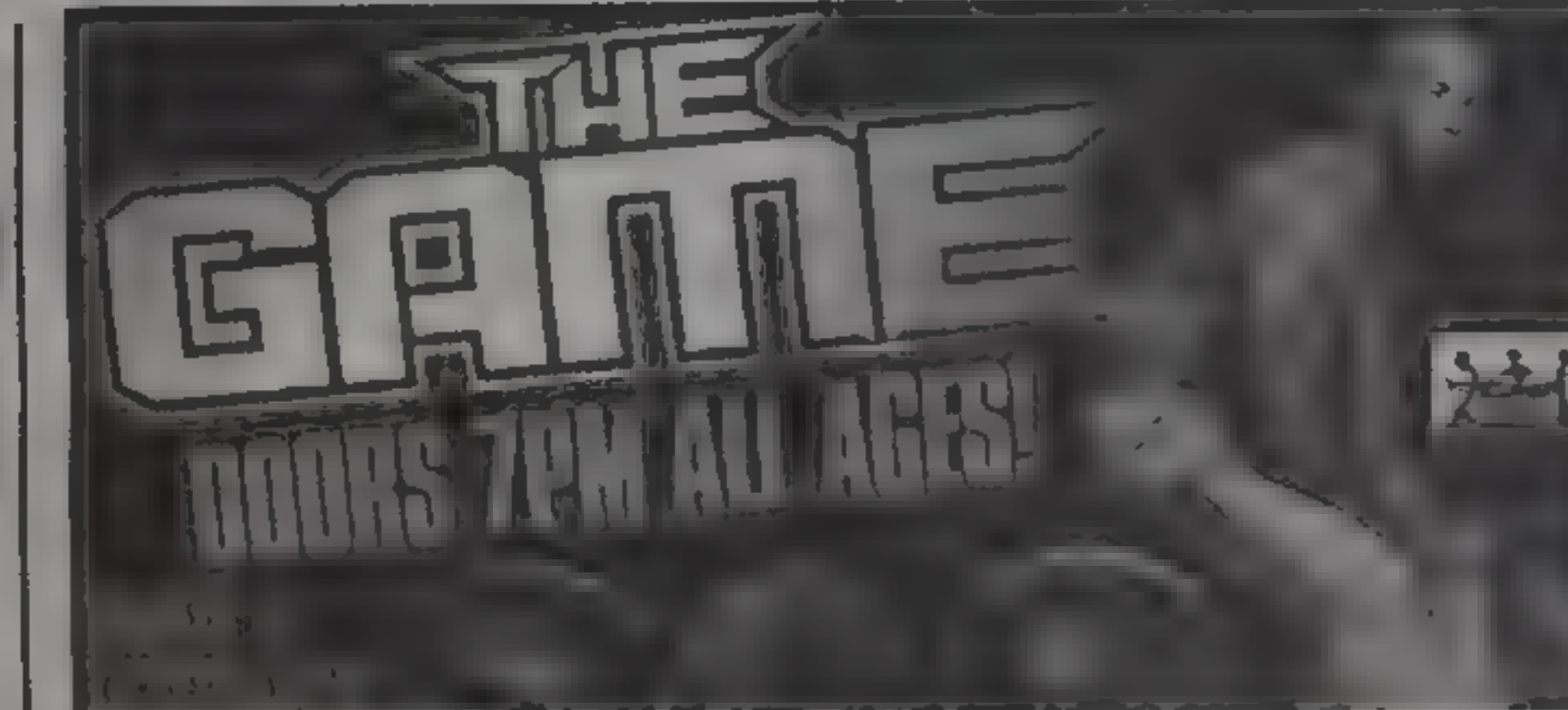
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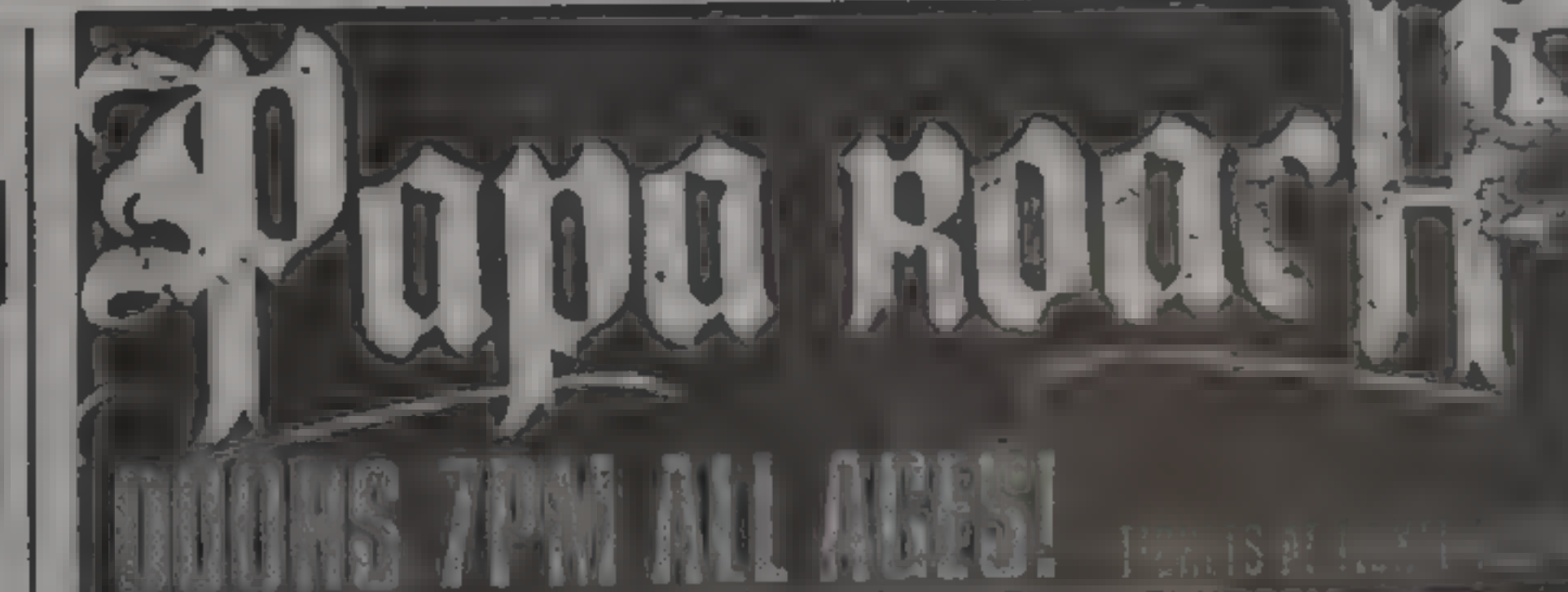
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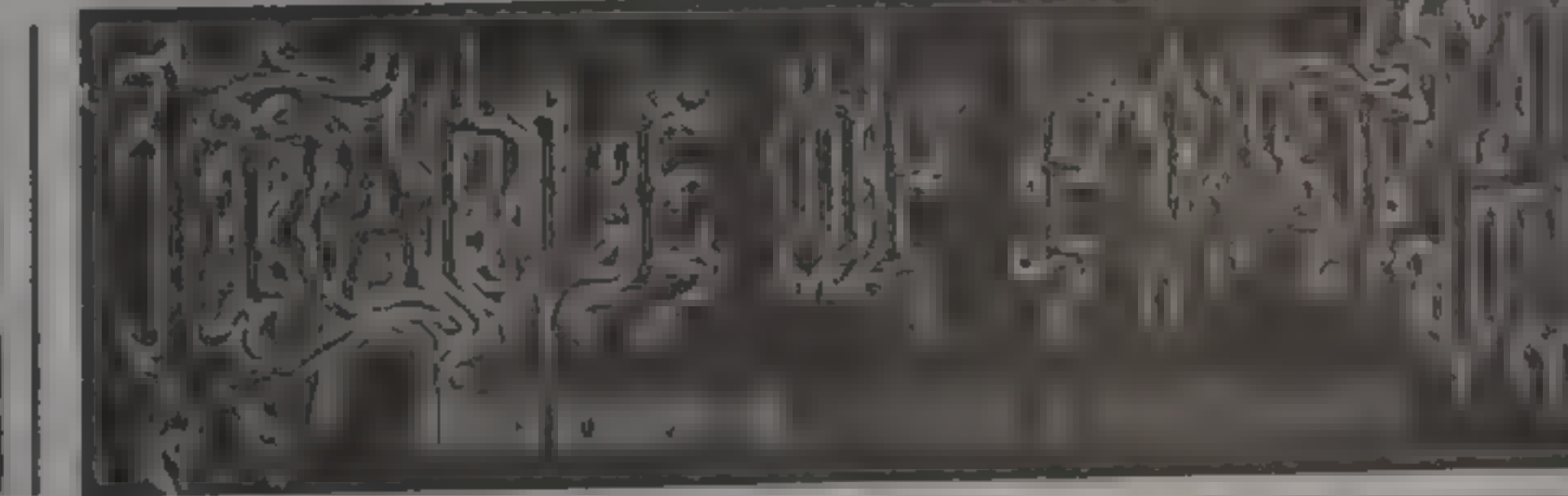
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No more *Idol* talk for Bobby Cameron

JOEL KELLY / joel@vuwweekly.com

As talented as he may be, blues guitarist **Bobby Cameron** is tired of being called "Canada's Greatest Guitarist."

"That's absolute bullshit," he says. "I don't know who gave me that."

He hypothesizes that the label may have come from being crowned the winner of MuchMusic's National Guitar Wars.

"I was glad to win it, but come on," he balks. "That's definitely not true. I've been pegged."

That being said, Cameron has drawn scores of praise from some of the biggest names in the business, including Jeff Healy, Sandro Dominelli and the late great Long John Baldry. Yet, Cameron is still

PREVIEW

FRI, DEC 22 (9 PM)

BOBBY CAMERON

WITH CITY VOX
SIDETRACK CAFÉ, \$10

restless.

"It's got me through a lot of doors, but at the end of the day, what's most important to me is moving someone with my music," he explains. "You're taught to believe that you're only successful when you get that big deal. I know people that have big deals and they are miserable."

He admits to feeling much the same way in his budding career as a songwriter with the publishing agency Carlin America. Writing material that was used by Kaylan Porter and Ryan Malcom, among others, Cameron's heart just wasn't into it.

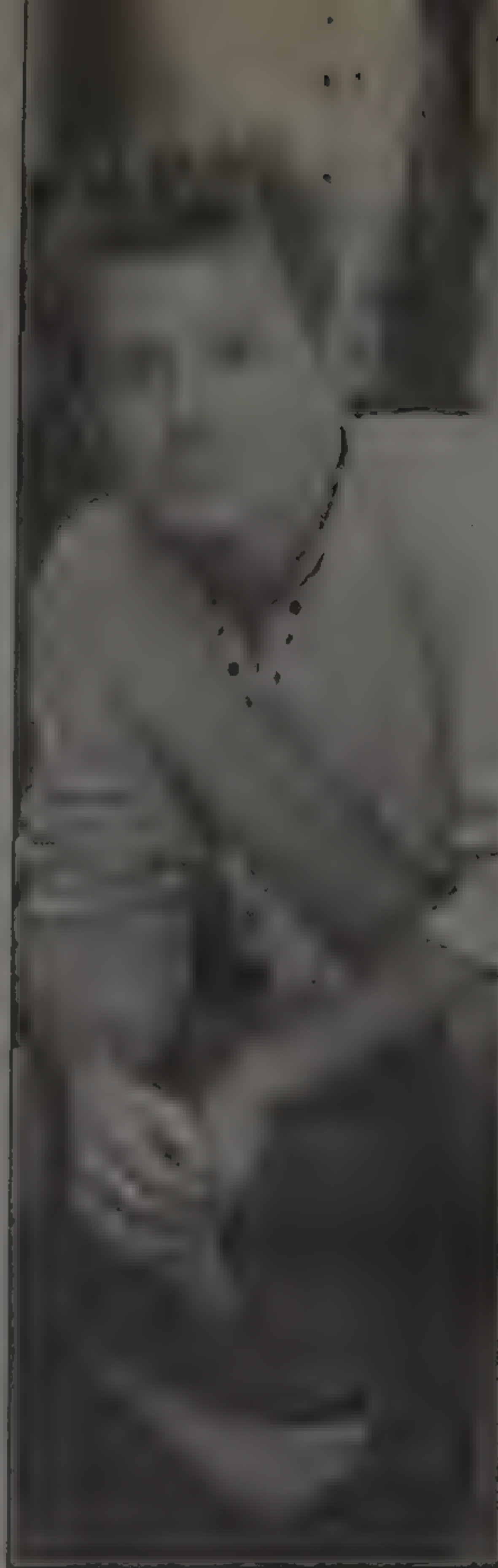
"I was so focused on that that I lost track of some things I had to have in my life," he recalls. "I've been away from [my own music] too long."

CAMERON IS BACK in the studio these days, however, recording a follow up to 2003's *Emotional Drift*.

"It's coming together, bits and pieces here and there," he says. "With ProTools, you can record just about anywhere you need to."

The songwriter promises that the new album will contain more of his blend of blues, roots, folk and pop—a combination that he feels doesn't jive with the established blues community.

"I haven't really been accepted by the blues community in Canada," he explains. "I like playing those 12-bar blues songs, but I like to pull some pop into it. You can stretch that box beyond its boundaries; I think they

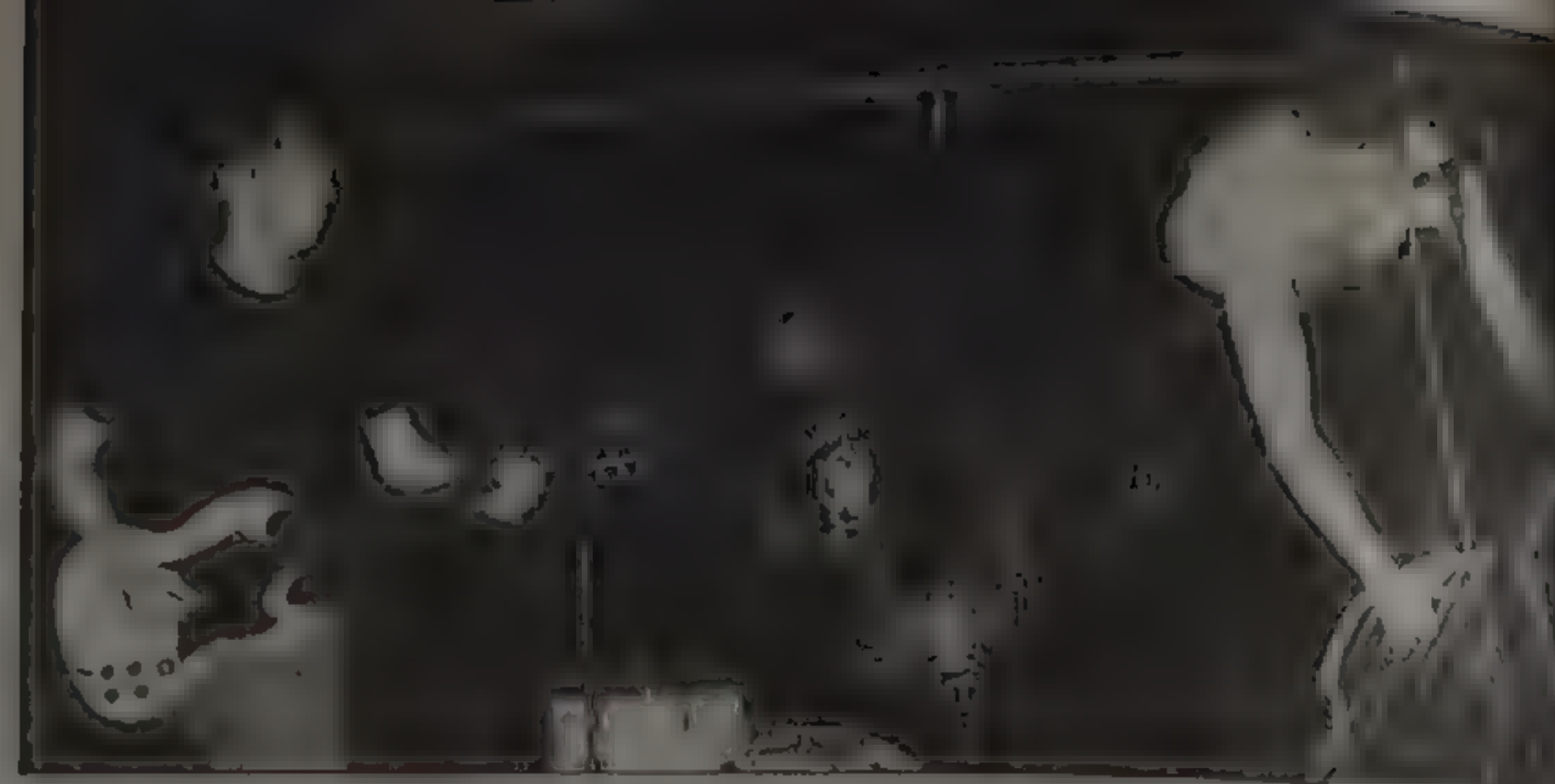


underestimate their audience."

Cameron certainly appreciates his audience in Edmonton, given his strong connections to our festival city.

"I first made a living as a musician out here," he remembers. "You guys support the talent. There are so many talented artists here, so many people that are really going hard to build what they got."

"I'm living in Toronto, but I still consider Edmonton home." ▼



Nightstalkers don't quit they just play louder

TARA ZUROWSKI / tara@vuwweekly.com

When **Nightstalkers** started out in 2002, the band members were quick to realize that their common rockabilly beat was not hardcore enough for them.

What they were looking for was something heavier and more harrowing—in short, something that would live up to their name. So they got an upright bass, ratcheted things up a few notches and began playing faster and faster.

"We lost a member early on," says drummer Kris Leasak, "so we started heavy drinking, and turned up our amps really loud. [It] seemed to work."

"Our music is kind of like a mix between old garage rock with a psychobilly-type sound," he continues. "We really wanted to make it sound raunchier, using more primitive techniques. We're trying to go a little more garage flavoured."

While the band's music remains flavoured by rockabilly, Leasak says that the group is running against the grain when it comes to style and trends. He sees the music as a subculture of a subculture.

"We are not scenesters," he explains, "just very genuine people that like cheap beer and to make a shit load of fun noise for people. A lot of purist rockabilly fans don't like

PREVIEW

WED, DEC 27 (6 PM)

NIGHTSTALKERS

WITH HARDTAILS, PROFUNDA ROSA,
THE FIREBRANDS
THE STUDIO, \$8 (ALL AGES)

us. I don't want to use the word 'cause we're not skids, but we need to wear the typical wing tipped rockabilly shoes ... No, no, no, we want Chuck Taylor's that are three years old, boots and ripped jeans!

STILL, THERE'S a definite sense of roots about this band. Leasak stands up while playing the drums following an old-school rock 'n' roll tradition. The result of Leasak's unorthodox—and physically difficult—approach is that when the band arrives in Edmonton to promote their first album, *To Cesspool*, they'll be blasting through half-hour speed sets.

The speedy, straightforward show seems particularly suited to this band, though. Leasak and bandmates have no desire to indulge in some sort of epic, think-piece music.

"It's funny," Leasak laughs. "The rock 'n' roll-billy thing is way better up in Edmonton, and we really like the cheap beer. We just want people to get hosed, smash shit and have a good time." ▼

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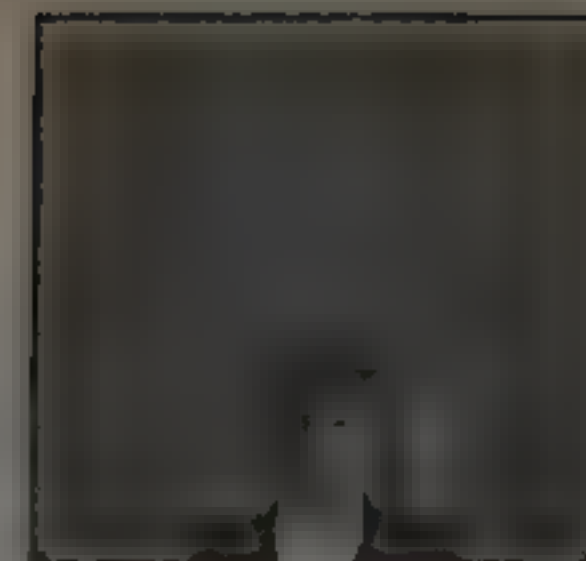
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ALBUM REVIEWS

NEW SOUNDS



NICK PERREAULT
THE GOOD INTENTIONS
SRAMELESS

EDEN MUNRO / eden@vuweekly.com



THIS ROCKS

"I get weak when I look at you / Weak when we touch / I can't speak when I look in your eyes." Anyone who either remembers or is fascinated by the 1980s might recall those lines from the grandiose original by Belinda Carlisle. While that version had a touch of sadness to it, in the hands of Nick Perreault the song becomes a melancholy contemplation on the shackles of love. Coupled with "Come Thou Font of Every Blessing," the old hymnal that rises up out of the final notes, Perreault demonstrates an impressive vision for arranging songs for maximum impact.

It helps, too, that Perreault happens to hold his own as a songwriter. There's a literate touch to the lyrics, be it in the way that Perreault sings about size and widescreen televisions on "Alberta Blues" (exactly what is the metaphor here? Well, it could be pretty much anything. Give it a listen and see what you come up with), or the sing-a-long barroom storytelling of "Miles." These are lyrics that really should be awkward, but Perreault's songs—and the impressive production by Chris Wynters and James Murdoch—bring them to life, forcing the listener to pay attention rather than simply humming along to another predictable melody. This is not an immediately accessible album by any means, but neither is it an easy one to dismiss, burrowing deep and inviting the listener to spend some time with the songs before making any judgments.

RED RAM
STARS ABLAZE
INDEPENDENT

EDEN MUNRO / eden@vuweekly.com



THIS ROCKS

The debut album from the local boys in Red Ram is loaded with canyon-deep grooves that provide plenty of winding twists and musical rapids throughout. *Stars Ablaze* opens with "Bad Bite," a collision between funky electric guitar chording and a rumbling bass, topped off with some steady hand claps and a slippery, squealing lap steel solo. Then there's the sickeningly addictive pounding on the morbidly humorous "Bird Flu," and, later on, the simple mix of a driving acoustic guitar and a turntable on "I Don't Believe in Luck."

While much of the disc makes it difficult to sit still when listening—you instinctively start moving a leg, then nodding and next thing you're up and knocking over the lamps—songwriting frontman Mark Feduk can still reign things in when he wants, indulging in more than one note throughout the album and giving the music some legs to go the distance. Guitars shimmer and glimmer on "Sol," there's a dark cloud drifting overtop of the stormy "Play the Game"—at least until the rhythm changes partway through and the sonic sky clears up—and a walking acoustic guitar riff blends with majestic strings for the plaintive pleas of "Save Me."

GHOST HOUSE
DEPARTURES
INDEPENDENT

BRYAN BIRTLES / bryan@vuweekly.com



THIS ROCKS

Some people must just be full of musical ideas; they burst at the seams. Could you imagine Vancouver's Jessie Gander doing anything but making music? The guy behind B. Rice, Operation Makeout and the endary db's—and the producer of 1 ally hundreds of records out of Hive recording studio in Burnaby—has a new band called Ghost House. How did you guess they'd be a some?

The album is softer than all of stuff I just mentioned, but as might expect, it's also pretty angu stopping on a dime to do something new within a song happens dozens times on *Departures*. The best part though, is his use of a Rhodes piano. I'm pretty biased, but that jangling plinking sound has always been music to my ears and Gander really rock out on the thing.

JOAN OSBORNE
PRETTY LITTLE STRANGER
VANGUARD

EDEN MUNRO / eden@vuweekly.com



THIS IS OK

Despite being most often remembered for that irritatingly obnoxious talk where she wonders what it might be like if God were of us, Joan Osborne's true strength has always been the powerfully soulful voice that marks her best work from her first independent record the way up to her latest release *Pretty Little Stranger*. Oh, yeah, and songwriting isn't too shabby either (except for the aforementioned "Of Us"). That's as true on this new disc as it always has been, and opens up right from the start, still on the title track, "I go out to the where the hearts are full of soul. And I lay mine out in the rain. It's evocative and her voice matches the imagery with just the right rasp.

If this album were all at Osborne's voice and lyrics would be just about perfect. Naturally, that's not the case. There's a little matter of the music. It alternates between soulful groove, countrified strumming and riffs, and that's just fine. In fact, fine, actually, as they move along in all the right spots. But, as often the case, the slick as ice production just doesn't suit the sort of age that Osborne reveals in her voice. If the edges were a bit frayed, this might have erased the memory of that

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MUSIC **ENTER SANDOR**
STEVEN SANDOR
steven@vueweekly.com

In last week's column, I chatted with VideoFACT executive director Beverley McKee about what bands should and shouldn't do when submitting their applications for grants.

During that discussion, we both discovered that music-biz execs and music journalists share a common pet peeve: the amount of awful photos we receive from bands. McKee and her selection panel need clean, crisp photos of the artists so they can have an idea on how those faces will translate to video. Us editors and writers need clean, crisp photos so we can show our readers pictures of our subjects.

But more and more, bands and their photographers think that press kits must be extensions of their art. I've seen press shots where band members' faces are hidden behind tree branches, bands who only send their images in black and white, bands who have had some weird Photoshop work done to the pictures, and pictures of bands where the members are tiny in the frame and standing far apart.

Sure, if you want, send us artsy shots of your band. We will admire the photos and then chuck them into the garbage. If you want press coverage or need to get the attention of an agent or music-biz exec, make sure to send a clear photo. With close-ups. Wow. Is it that hard?

Remember that most newspapers

print on low-quality paper and we need to shrink the images to fit our pages. And, let's face it: up-and-coming bands won't be getting front-page billing. So, chances are we will need to use small pictures with small stories. So, we need pictures that will still be clear when shrunk down. Sure, the standing-in-a-junkyard shot may seem like a great idea in 8x11, but think about this—how will this picture look on newsprint when it is only an inch or two wide? Is it easy for us to crop a head-shot out of the photo?

Bands and photographers have no idea about how much an "art" shot can kill interest in a band when it's seen by a grant-fund jury or by an overworked music editor. Here's an example; a couple of months back, I wrote a feature on a West-Coast musician who was about to play in Toronto. What was supposed to be a main feature basically got knocked back to a brief, without art, at the bottom of the page, simply because the photos we received were blurry and couldn't be cropped to fit a normal rectangle picture box. Basically, what was supposed to be big press turned into tiny press, and it had nothing to do with her work, her album or her interview. It was all about a photo that was taken without thinking about who would be using it in the end.

Next week: The dos and don'ts of press kits. ♡

Steven Sandor is a former editor-in-chief of Vue Weekly, now an editor and author living in Toronto.

HAIKU **QUICK SPINS**
WHITEY AND TB PLAYER
quickspins@vueweekly.com

FANTASIA
FANTASIA
SONY/BMG
Cookie-cutter soul
From the Master Keebler elf
Simon P Cowell

V/A
MUCH DANCE #1'S
SONY/BMG
Got more hits than a
Night with Timothy Leary!
Kinda played out though

JOSEF K
ENTOMOLOGY
DOMINO
Scottish missing link
Between Joy Division and
Television! WOW!

PEELER
EVILS OF THE
MODERN PLEASURE DANCE
INDISPOTNT
A million rainbows
Erupted when this fucker
Flew into the wall

BOW WOW
THE PRICE OF FAME
SONY/BMG
Made the transition
From Li'l to Big better than
Li'l Bonaduce

DOC WALKER
DOC WALKER
OPEN ROAD
One more band in the
New wave of young, pretty-boy
Nü-country douchebags

APOSTLE OF HUSTLE
NATIONAL ANTHEM OF NOWHERE
ARTS & CRAFTS
Indie rock disguised
As pop music disguised as
Indie rock. Wait, what?

LOCO GRINGOS
LOCO GRINGOS
SAUSTEX
Tex-Mex stoner band
Puts out 15-year-old disc
It has not aged well

HICKNODS
CORN DEMON
SAUSTEX
Corny cow-punkers
Put out 20-year-old disc
See above review

A "STAND ON YOUR
CHAIR, SING OUT LOUD"
KIND OF NIGHT!!!

The
IVORY CLUB
& EBONY LOUNGE

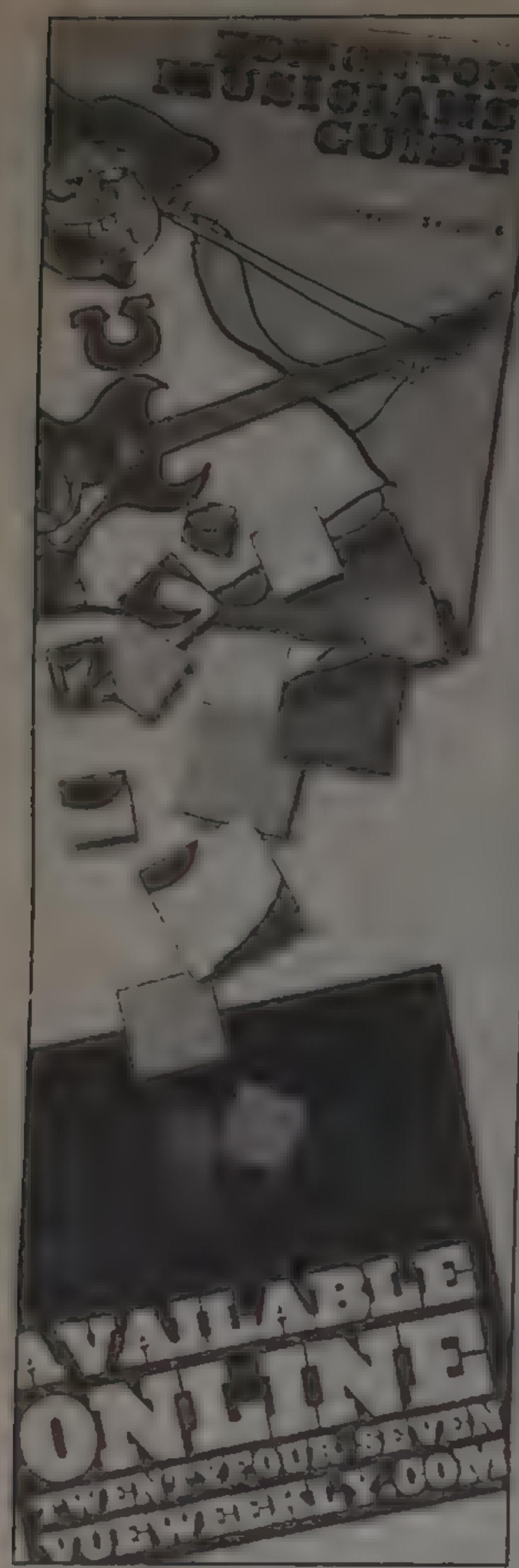
**FULL
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DUELING PIANO
BAR!** Shows start Thursday 8pm,
Friday and Saturday 9pm.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT - STEAK & LOBSTER \$15
DRESS REHEARSAL EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT - NO COVER

2940 Calgary Trail South 465-6800 theivoryclub.com

MISSING yet
out soon
Mike
"Milky Bar Kid"
Brennan
Moving to Ireland

IBIDIT
at least one more night



Van Buuren spins his passion round like a record

CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vancouverweekly.com

If there's one thing that you get from talking to Dutch trance DJ **Armin van Buuren**, it's that he is totally and completely in love—with his work.

The words, "it's what I love to do; it's my passion" have become his mantra. And judging from his recent upgrade from the number three to the number two DJ in the world in *DJ Magazine's* annual poll—in which some 220 000 people voted—dance music aficionados around the world are feeling the love.

"It's not about the number or the position that I am in—number two, three, five, whatever—it's just the fact that people appreciate what you do," van Buuren says over the phone from his home in Holland. "It's a big honour. I would still be making trance, still be doing this if I was number 10 000 or whatever. You know, I've always believed in this sound. It's just the fact that so many people appreciate what you do gives a really good feeling."

Despite the accolades, however, van Buuren is never content to just rest on his laurels. He maintains a hefty schedule, zigzagging around the globe to spin small and large parties alike, and hosts *A State of Trance*, a successful weekly syndicated radio show. But he also runs record label Armada, as well as makes his own music that has, in the past, hit the

PREVIEW

THU, DEC 28 (8:30 PM)
ARMIN VAN BUUREN
WITH DJ REMI, DAVID STONE
EDMONTON EVENT CENTRE, \$26.50

decks of the likes of Sasha and John Digweed—tracks that have been compiled on his recently released artist album *10 Years*, to commemorate his decade behind the decks.

"I am only as good as my last gig," he says. "So, I feel that I can always improve myself. You know, the last gig I did was in Guadalajara, Mexico, and there was 6 000 people there, and yet I am very critical about the set that I played—some mixes that I might not have really liked, or the tempo or the energy of the set might of dropped."

"So I always try to reflect on my set—what were the good sides of the set, what were the bad sides of the set—and always try to be critical of yourself. Never be satisfied with what you do, always be your own critic."

IT'S THIS ATTITUDE that keeps him on his toes and fresh-sounding for lovers of trance. While he's had offers to try his hand at soundtrack-work in LA—after working a highly successful remix of 24's theme music a couple of years ago, he met with studio execs—van Buuren plans on staying put behind the decks, enjoying what he calls his hobby and passion.

"At one point I was actually think-



ing about moving to LA, but I made a really conscious decision not to do that," he says. "At the moment, what I am doing is successful. I love what I do, I love being in Holland—that's my home. That's where all of my family is and that's where all of my friends are."

"And I just love dance music at the moment," he enthusiastically repeats. "I have this door that is opened and I can always go to LA and start working on movies, because the offer is there. Of course, I'd have to work my way up to the top, which is a different story than the whole DJ thing. And it's definitely a thing that I want to do, but

at this moment I just want to focus on my label and my DJ career."

It's a pretty charmed life indeed, and as anyone who has gotten a taste of van Buuren's vibe can attest, his enthusiasm is contagious. The transporting quality of the music he produces verges on the transcendent, and van Buuren tries to speak his life-affirming ideas through his decks and speak to the soul.

"I've never done it for drugs or money or any of the wrong reasons. I am doing this because I love it," he says. "I'm just a very passionate guy that I am in this position that I can do what I love 24/7." ▼

ZODIAC FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 19)

Happy Holy Daze, Aries! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gifts for you. What might inspire you to take maximum advantage of the cosmic currents in 2007? Here's my answer: a plane ticket to an exotic playground where your mind will get blown and your emotions aired out and your instincts educated. Another gift I'd love you to have would be a pilgrimage to a spot where you lived once upon a time. There you could take advantage of Nelson Mandela's counsel: "There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered."

Taurus (APR 20 - MAY 20)

Happy Holy Daze, Taurus! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What item might inspire you to take maximum advantage of the cosmic currents in 2007? I've decided on *Winning With Integrity: Getting What You're Worth Without Selling Your Soul*, a book by sports agent Leigh Steinberg. Here's a taste of Steinberg's advice: align yourself with people who share your values; learn all you can about the other party; create a climate of cooperation, not conflict; learn to listen; convince the other party you have an option, even if you don't.

GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUN 20)

Happy Holy Daze, Gemini! I've been thinking about the perfect holiday gift for you to give yourself. Considering the cos-

mic currents in 2007, what offering would be most appropriate? The answer is a magic mirror. Why? Because I think you should look at your reflection more often in the coming year. Gaze more deeply into your own eyes and try harder to find out who's really there inside you. Talk to yourself pointedly while you're in front of your magic mirror; ask yourself probing questions. And every now and then, press up close to your reflection for a kiss.

CANCER (JUN 21 - JUL 22)

Happy Holy Daze, Cancerian! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What symbolic offering might put you in the right mood to deal proactively with potential problems in 2007? I've decided on a set of those specially-designed clothes-storage bags that allow you to suck all the air out, compressing your sweaters and pants so that they take up significantly less space in your luggage or closet. Hopefully these bags would inspire you to come up with creative applications of the "less is more" principle, which will be a recurring theme for you in the coming months.

LEO (JUL 23 - AUG 22)

Happy Holy Daze, Leo! In 2007, I predict that you'll experience a metaphorical version of something that's rare in nature: a gentle birth. There'll be a big new addition to your life, in other words, and its arrival won't hurt a bit—it may even feel downright ecstatic. Here's some more mysterious good news: in the coming months, you will have the power to learn from the moon, converse with the dead and remember your ancient origins. And get this: the adventures that amuse you

most could involve foam rubber, distant bells, smoke rising from manholes, plums from Damascus and exotic trophies. One more thing, Leo: in 2007, brand new bedtime stories will be mandatory.

VIRGO (AUG 23 - SEP 22)

Mytho-poetic scholars say that honey symbolizes emotional maturity. When it appears in your dreams or reveries, it may mean you're expanding your capacity to experience feelings that are positive and healthy for you. Since 2007 will bring opportunities for you to do these exact things, Virgo, I suggest that you give honey an honored place in your life. Maybe buy some of the best stuff on the market, put it in a fine decanter and keep it on an altar in your bedroom. Happy Holy Daze!

LIBRA (SEP 23 - OCT 22)

Happy Holy Daze, Libra! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What symbolic offering might inspire you to be in closest alignment with the cosmic currents in 2007? I've decided on the book *Power Unseen: How Microbes Rule the World*. In it, author Bernard Dixon praises bacteria, viruses, fungi and protozoa. Without them, he says, we'd be nothing. They're instrumental in providing our food, purifying our drinking water and processing our sewage. If you keep *Power Unseen* in a prominent place in your home during the coming months, it might constantly remind you to be reverent toward and grateful for the little things—which is exactly what the astrological omens suggest you should do. Maybe the book will also inspire you to be alert for invisible helpers and inconspicuous allies.

SCORPIO (OCT 23 - NOV 21)

Happy Holy Daze, Scorpio! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What symbolic offering might inspire you to be in closest alignment with the cosmic currents in 2007? I've decided on Elvis Presley's favourite midnight snack: a peanut butter and banana sandwich deep-fried in butter. Why? Because like the King, you should aggressively pursue the unique experiences that will reliably give you comfort and sustenance. Like the King, you should feel no guilt about doing unusual things that you know in your heart will help you perform at your best.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22 - DEC 21)

Happy Holy Daze, Sagittarius! My gift for you is the following oracle: a breakthrough you were blessed with in 1995 will be coming back around in 2007. How? Three possible ways: (1) You'll be inspired to make changes to whatever sprung from that original breakthrough 12 years ago. (2) You'll be visited by a new version of that breakthrough, on a higher octave this time. (3) You'll attempt a quantum leap that resembles the original, but happens in a different area of your life.

CAPRICORN (DEC 22 - JAN 19)

Happy Holy Daze, Capricorn! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What symbolic offering might inspire you to be in closest alignment with the cosmic currents in 2007? I've decided on Ed Anger's book *Let's Pave the Stupid Rainforests & Give School Teachers Stun Guns*. Not because I agree with his assertions, but simply because his outrageousness might push you to dream up wild solutions to your same old boring dilemmas; his

rowdy spirit may fuel your own rebellious flights of imagination that will inspire you to fight back against the numbing influence of the loony bin known as "reality."

AQUARIUS (JAN 20 - FEB 18)

You should and could be the zodiac's premier networker in 2007. The connections you foster and the deals you broker could save the world—or at least your local segment of the world. In order to pull it off with maximum effectiveness, you should also be the zodiac's premier fun-maker. Throw parties, tell jokes and constantly invite people to play harder and take themselves less seriously. What can you prepare for this destiny? Start by giving yourself holiday gifts that will help you fill your assignments. How about installing a backyard water park, for instance, or about some comedy lessons from a pro like the humour coach in the film *Happy Holy Daze*, Aquarius!

PISCES (FEB 19 - MAR 20)

Happy Holy Daze, Pisces! I've been meditating on the perfect holiday gift for you. What symbolic item might stimulate you to take maximum advantage of the cosmic currents in 2007? I've decided on a ladder. This power object will signal important themes for you: (1) Your potential to climb to a higher level of intelligence and clout, giving you an expansive view of your surroundings. The need to make this ascent real and deliberately (not quickly and not with the aid of simple tools (not a metaphorical equivalent of an elevator, for example, with someone to hold the steady). ▼

EVENTS WEEKLY

VIEW FREE LISTINGS TO 426.2889
MAIL GLENYS AT
VUEWEEKLY.COM
IS FRIDAY AT 3 PM

CLUBS/LECTURES

ANIAN NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE 11205-101 Ave. • Basketball: every Mon (5-7pm) • Healing Circle: every Mon (6-8pm) • Boxing: every Mon/Thu (7-8pm) • Volleyball: every Tue (6-8pm) • Beadwork Class: every Tue (6-8pm) • C.N.F.C. Pow-wow: every Wed (6-8pm) • Hip-Hop Class: every Thu (5-7pm) • Cree Class: every Thu (6-8pm) • Elders and Residency: every Fri (all day) • Safe Using and Harm Reduction: Last Fri each month (11am-12pm) • Tobacco Reduction: every Fri (1-3pm) • Drop-in Night: every Fri (6-8pm)

RELATION CAFE Unity of Edmonton Church, 105 Ave. • Meeting presented by Rev. Yvonne • Every Tue (1-3pm)

AT EXPEDITIONS HOSTEL TRAVEL SLIDE Hostelling International, 10847-81 Ave (455-6216) • Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Sahah (2004) by John Beaton • Jan. 8 (pm) • Free

ES ALBERTA CAMERA CLUB Allendale School, 106 St (465-9770) www.imagesabca • Meets 2nd and 4th Thu (8pm) each month featuring pre-prints, speakers, workshops, outings, monthly and annual competitions. Photographers of all levels are welcome • \$40 (individual membership)/\$50 (family) (full-time student); visitors may attend three consecutive sittings

ING WITH LOSS (454-1231, ext. 224) • A presentation on grieving and supporting those who grieve • **Lions Senior's Centre**, 7524-139 Ave; Wed, 10am-noon • **Woodcroft Library**, 13420-114 Ave, Jan. 3 (6:30-8:30pm) • Pre-register

INATION • Gaden Samten Ling Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Society 11403-101 St, gadenmeditation.org (479-0014) by Kushok Gyung Dharmachoe, beginner Tue (7pm), intermediate Thu (7pm), advanced Sun (11am-1pm) • **Brahma World Spiritual Organization**, 208-10132-101, (425-1050) www.bkwsu.org; Haja Yoga Meditation

ENT TALK (481-1292) Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton offers support groups and workshops for parents at various city locations

ESTEEM SUPPORT GROUP (496-5930) • For men who are experiencing chaos as a result of a life crisis and who feel isolated • Group meets each week

STMASTERS CLUBS • "N"ators: Beverly Hills Church meeting room, 11919-40 St (476-6963) • Speaking skills, leadership skills, time management, organizational, listening and social skills; every 17-8pm • **Pursuers:** Best Western Cedar Park Inn, Gateway Boulevard (457-0808) www.pursuers.org; • Meetings to improve your communication and leadership skills in a supportive environment every Wed (pm) • **Chamber Toastmasters Club:** (780) 459- • Visit us and learn how to deliver effective presentations, conduct business meetings, and develop as a speaker and a listener, every Thu (8pm)

AL IMPROVISATION GROUP 432 2226 or email: andrea.st@pmn.ca • Group using voice as an instrument in impro-exercises and in free vocal improvisation • The first Sat each month (1-4pm)

TER LABYRINTH WALK Riverdale Hall, 9231-100 Ave (424-8339) • Begin your new year with a few moments of quiet reflection with Jean Ure and Nancy • Open to all ages, and is done in silence. Children welcome • Jan. 6 (11am-2pm) • Free, donation requested

WHEN IN BLACK In front of the Old Strathcona Farmers Market • Silent vigil every 1st and 3rd Sat ea month in silence for a world without violence (11am)

QUEER LISTINGS

Faculty of Education, U of A Campus • Sex, gender differences in education and culture group • Contact Dr. Andrea Gracia andrea.gracia@ualberta.ca for info

SUAL WOMEN'S COFFEE GROUP Groups joined-cari/group/edmonton • Social for bi-curious and bisexual women • 2nd Thu ea month (7-10pm)

AND SADDLES 10242-106 St (423-5014) • Open with pool tables, restaurant, shows. Men only

ITS NITE CLUB 117258 Jasper Ave (488-7736) • Openly 9pm-3am, Fri 8pm-3pm • Sun: Rotating DJs with Mz Bianca and Mz Vanity Fair in The Lounge and GoDive and Donnatella NE1 in The Show • DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Mon:

Amateur strip contest with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Tue: Free pool and tourney, DJ Arrowchaser • Wed: Hump day with DJ Sexy Sean • Thu: Wet underwear contest with Mia Fellow, midnight, DJ WestCoastBabyDaddy • Fri: We made 'em famous! DJ Eddy Toonflash, come early to avoid lineup, no cover before 10pm • Sat: Undie night for men only, free pool and tourney, DJ Arrowchaser • Open Christmas Day

DOWN UNDER MENS BATH HOUSE 12224 Jasper Ave (482-7960) • Open 24/7 • www.gayedmonton.com

EDMONTON RAINBOW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION www.edmontonrba.org • Monthly after business mixer. Network and share contacts in the GLBT business community • Second Wed ea month

HIV NETWORK OF EDMONTON SOCIETY 300, 11456 Jasper Ave (488-5742) or contact7@hivedmonton.com • Programs and support services for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS and related illnesses. Counselling, referrals, support groups, harm reduction, education, advocacy and public awareness campaigns

ILLUSIONS SOCIAL CLUB Roost, 10345-104 St (387-3343) • Crossdressers, transsexuals, friends and supporters meet the 2nd Thu each month (8pm); http://groups.yahoo.com/group/edmonton_illusions/

INSIDE/OUT U of A Campus • Campus-based organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified and queer (LGBTQ) faculty, graduate student, academic, straight allies and support staff • 3rd Thu ea month (fall/winter terms). Speakers Series. Contact Kris (kwells@ualberta.ca)

LIVING POSITIVE 404, 10408-124 St, www.edmliving-positive.ca (1-877-975-9448/488-5768) • Providing confidential peer support to people living with HIV • Every Tue (7-9pm): Support group • Daily drop-in, peer counselling

MADELEINE SANAM FOUNDATION Faculté St. Jean, 8406 Marie-Anne Gaboury (91 St) Rm 3-18 (490-7332) • Program for HIV-AIDS prevention, treatment and harm reduction in French, English and other African languages • Every 3rd and 4th Sat (9am-5pm) • Free (member)/\$10 (membership) • Pre-register

MAKING WAVES SWIMMING CLUB www.geocities.com/makingwaves_edm • Recreational and competitive swimming with coaching, beginners encouraged to participate. Socializing after practices • Every Tue and Thu

PRIDE CENTRE OF EDMONTON 9540-111 Ave (488-3234) • Open: Mon-Thu 1pm-10pm, Fri 3-10pm • Bears Movie Night: Bears Club: last Sun ea month (1-5pm, TV room) • Trans Education/Support Group: Support and education for transsexual, transgendered, intersexed, two-spirited and questioning individuals; 1st, 3rd, last Sun ea month (2-4pm) with Cody • Sunday Night Men's Discussion Group: Mens social and discussion group; every Sun (7pm); Rob Wells at robwells780@hotmail.com • Friends and Family Playgroup: 2nd Sun ea month (2-4pm) with Noelle, friendsandfamilyplaygroup-owner@yahoo.com • Monday Movie Night: Movie nights with themed movies and discussion afterwards; every Mon • TTIO Alliance: Support meeting for transgender, transsexual, intersex and questioning 2nd Tue ea month; ttiqualliance@shaw.ca, 718-1412 • GLBT Seniors Drop-In: Every Thu (2-4pm) with Jeff Bovee, 488-3234 • Sick and tired of being sick and tired? Cocaine Anonymous meeting, Thu 7-8pm; CA Hotline 425-2715 • HIV Outreach: Drop-in circle every other Thu (7pm) • Youth Understanding Youth: Youth support and social group; every Sat (7-9pm); yuy@shaw.ca; www.members.shaw.ca/yuy • Suit Up and Show Up-Big Book Study; Sat (12-2); suitupshowup@hotmail.com • NDP LGBT Caucus: last Sun ea month with Jay, 488-3234

PRISM BAR AND GRILL 10524-101 St, back entrance (990-0038) • Lesbian and gay bar/restaurant

THE ROOST 10345-104 St (426-3150) • Open Thu-Sun 8pm-3am; Fri Sat 8pm-4am • Thu: Gorgeous featuring hostess Dr. Lexxi Tronic. Featuring Drag Kings and Queens, burlesque and rotating game shows. Bands upstairs monthly • Fri: All Request Dance Party every Friday with DJ Jazzy • Sat: Always like New Years Eve: with DJ Dan (retro) downstairs and DJ Jazzy (new music) upstairs • Sun: A fabulous Drag show every Sunday featuring hostess Connie Lingua. Rotating guests, live singers and drag Queens, with contests. \$2 cover; free pool all night long • Weekends: \$4 (members)/\$6 (non-member)/Sun \$2 cover • Open Christmas Day at 8pm; open Boxing Day at 8pm

STEAMWORKS 11745 Jasper Ave (451-5554) • Steam baths open daily (24hrs)

WOODYS 11723 Jasper Ave (488-6557) • Open Daily (noon) • Sat-Tue Karaoke with Tizzy and Patrick • Sat-Sun Pool Tournaments

SPECIAL EVENTS

BRIGHT NIGHTS WINTER FAMILY FESTIVAL Hawrelak Park, 8330 Groat Rd (426-4620) • Until Sun, Jan. 7 • Donation of cash or non-perishable food items for the Edmonton Food Bank

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TOURS (420-1757) • Edmonton Transit for a tour through Bright Lights, and the Legislative and Royal Alberta Museum grounds • Until Dec. 21 • Tickets available at TIX on the Square

EDMONTON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL—THE WORLDS HOTTEST COMMERCIALS Garamau Theatre, 8712-109 St, www.edmontonfilmfest.com • Fundraiser, a theatrical screening of the best TV commercials from around the world • Tickets \$10 (adult)/\$7 (youth/student)/\$6 (Monday screenings and seniors) •

Jan. 26-Feb. 8; 2pm matinees on Sat and Sun

FAMILY FEST NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATIONS—STONY PLAIN Rotary Park, 4815-44 Ave • The Stony Plain Kinsmen Club and the Town of Stony Plain present this family festival to celebrate New Year's. Beginning with hayrides, hot chocolate, and skating, and ending with fireworks at 8:45pm

ILLUSIONS—MAGIC 'N MIRACLES Jubilee Auditorium, 11455-87 Ave • Thu, Dec. 28 (2pm, 5:30pm, 8:30pm)

NEW YEAR'S EVE DOWNTOWN 2006 Various downtown venues, www.eventsedmonton.ca (423-2822 ex 24) • Western Canada's largest New Year's celebration. An alcohol-free event featuring entertainment, strolling entertainers, public skating, a street dance, family activities and fireworks • Free

NEW YEAR'S EVE FAMILY CELEBRATIONS—SHERWOOD PARK Broadmoor Lake Park, Oak Street and Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park (467-2211) • Family activities; skate, toboggan as well as wagon rides, food, with fireworks at 8pm • Free

WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATIONS Westwood Unitarian Congregation, 11135-65 Ave (434-5819) • Three different services; the family-oriented service at 7pm also has childcare available. Adult services are at 9pm and 11pm. All of the services incorporate earth-based and pagan elements, singing and music which celebrate the return of the light. A short reception, with home baked goodies and mulled apple cider, follows each service • Thu, Dec. 21

KARAOKE

BAR-B-BAR 4249-23 Ave (461-2244) • Every Thu and Sat (9pm): James, Mr. Entertainment • Every Sun (7pm): James, Mr. Entertainment

CAMELOT SPORTS BAR 10231-95 St (425-4298) • Every Sun (8pm-12): with Jeannie and Bruce

CASTLEDOWN'S PUB 16753-100 St • Every Tue (9pm-1am): with Off-Key Entertainment

CHRISTOPHER'S PARTY PUB 37 Millbourne Rd (462-6565) • Every Tue (9pm): with Sonia, Prosound Productions

CROWN AND ANCHOR 15277 Castledowns Rd (472-7696) • Every Thu

FRANCO'S PUB 14059 Victoria Trail (478-4636) • Every Thu-Sat (9pm-2am): with Jeannie and Bruce

GAS PUMP 10166-114 St (488-4841) • Every Tue-Wed (9:30pm): Gord's Best Live Singing Show

HAWKEYE'S TOO 10044-102 St (421-9898) • Every Fri (8pm-midnight): with Deb Thulin, Hot Karaoke Productions

KNIGHTS PUB SOUTH 19 Ave, 105 St (461-0587) • Every Fri-Sat (10pm-2am): Gord's Best Live Singing Show

LIONSHED PUB Coast Terrace Inn, 4440 Gateway Blvd (431-5815) • Every Sun (8pm): With Evolution Entertainment

MAZADAR 10725-104 Ave (429-4940) • Fridays karaoke (5pm-late): with Chris

MOJO'S Best Western Hotel, Fort Saskatchewan (998-7888) • Every Fri (9:30pm): with Sonia/Prosound Productions

NEWCASTLE PUB 6108-90 Ave (490-1999) • Every Thu Karaoke

O'CONNOR'S IRISH PUB 9013-88 Ave (469-8165) • Every Thu (9pm-1am)

ON THE ROCKS 11740 Jasper Ave (482-4767) • Salsa and the City Thursdays: Latin music and Salsa lessons; every Thu (9pm)

ORLANDO'S 1 15163-121 St (457-1649) • Every Wed/Thu/Sun (9:30pm-2am): with TLC Entertainment

PEPPERS Westmount Mall, 135 St, 113 Ave (451-8022) • Every Thu (9:30pm-1:30am): with Gord from Stonerock Productions

RATT 2-900 Students' Union Bldg, 8900 114 St, U of A (492-2153) • Hey, What Are These Tunes Called? Name That Tune every Tue with Colin Krieger • Karaoke, baby; every Wed (9pm): with Colin and Darrell

ROSARIOS 11715-108 Ave (447-4727) • Longest running Karaoke bar; 7 days a week

ROSIE'S BAR AND GRILL • Downtown, 10604-101 St (423-3499); every Mon-Sat (9pm); Sun (7pm): with Ruth • Highstreet, 10315-124 St (482-1600); daily (9:30pm) • Old Strathcona, 10475-80 Ave (439-7211); every Thu-Sat (9:30pm-1:30am) • 99 St, 63 Ave; every Thu-Sat (9pm-1am): with Off-Key Entertainment

SANTANNAS 17930 Stony Plain Rd (481-7625) • Every Wed: (8pm-12): with Jeannie and Bruce

SILVER MARTINI 10668-156 St • Every Sat (9pm-1am) with ProSound

SPORTSWORLD INLINE AND ROLLER SKATING DISCO 13710-104 St (472-6336) • Every Tue, Fri-Sat (7pm-midnight), Sat-Sun (11-5pm)

THORSBY HOTEL • Every Sat (9:30pm-1:30am) with Prosound

X-WRECKS LOUNGE 10143-50 St • Every Wed (7:30-11:30pm) with Sonia, Prosound

YESTERDAY'S 112-205 Carnegie Dr, St. Albert (459-0295) • Every Thu (9:30pm-2am): with Off-Key Entertainment

ZAKS ON 51ST AVENUE 10525-51 Ave (432-5853/436-5047) • Karaoke Nights: Every Fri (10pm-2am)



‘Naughty’ and ‘nice’ are open to interpretation

QUEER **TOTALLY GAY**
LUKE FOSTER
totallygay@vuwweekly.com

Dear Santa:
You're looking very nice these days. Slim and trim. I know they say you can be heavy "as long as you're healthy," but let's face it—you weren't healthy. You were a fat, sloppy mess and only a handful of cookie crumbs away from plunging right into a diabetic coma. But from what I hear, that personal trainer I referred you to last year has really whipped you into shape. Ah, Gunther: that walking slab of tanned muscle, tousled chestnut hair and pure artificial testosterone really knows how bust your ass, am I right? Make a note: I want Gunther for Christmas.
I've also heard that you're rethinking the whole red velvet/white fur combo you've been working with all these years. Good call on getting Versace to develop a new signature look for you. It might not be the most comfortable textile to be jet-setting around the world in, but let me tell you, wearing skintight black leather from head-to-toe will get you more than a date if you're in the right bar.
But enough with the pleasantries. I want stuff. Good stuff this time, not like last year when I asked for that blond guy who plays Rory's hot-to-trot boyfriend on *Gilmore Girls* under my tree in nothing but white boxer briefs and a bright red bow and you gave me a George Foreman grill instead. Don't get me wrong: I've prepared many delicious, lean, mean and fat-reduced meals on that grill, but ...
Anyway, as I was about to say before you got me thinking again about the prospect of receiving a real-live present of semi-nude, actor-flesh under my tree this year, I've been extra super nice this year. I leave my empty cans and bottles out by the dumpster for the homeless to recycle for me. I stopped throwing lit cigarettes at stray cats even though I just know that they're all out to get me. And I've even been nice to my sister. In fact, just the other day I made eye contact with her while she was talking to me. I know, right? I've *sooo* earned my place on the Nice List this year. I don't care what my psychologist might have told you. He's a liar. They're all liars!

OKAY. MAYBE I HAVEN'T been 100 per cent nice this year. I'll admit that I've maybe gossiped once or twice. Nothing really that mean, but I may have used the word "cunt" more than once or twice to describe one or two of my closest, dearest friends. But it was only when they weren't around, so that doesn't really count. I've also had gay sex more than once. That by itself has probably earned me a top-spot on the Naughty List, but we'll just let God punish me for that later so you can still give me presents now.

So, since we've established just exactly how nice and deserving I am of you and your elves' best wares, I'm going to start listing off everything a young gay boy like myself would love to receive for Christmas. First off, I want some needles and thread because I'm all about the needlework these days. But you probably know that already, don't you? You see all and know all, you omnipotent courier of Christmas joy. You're actually kind of like Jesus that way. Or Miss Cleo. Anyway, I also want a pair of Sorel winter boots, the rubber kind that cinch up right below your knee so your socks don't get soggy when you're outside. I'm planning to do a lot of frolicking in the snow this season and I could really use the proper footwear. Some wool socks and long underwear would be nice, again, for all of the frolicking. Some DVDs for watching, some books for reading. A loyal manservant named Theodore who will do all of my bidding. A kettle that plugs into the wall so I don't have to make my homemade iced tea in the same saucepan I use to make spaghetti. As for the rest of my list, surprise me. Just get me anything that's expensive and hunky.

That's all I really have to tell you at the moment. Remember, I've been really, really, really nice this year. Hey, next time I see a white-haired leather daddy at the Roost, I promise that I'll come over and sit on your lap so I can make these requests to you in person. And don't worry if you decide not to use your real name. If you tell me it's Roger or Earl, or even Tiny, I'll still know it's you.

XOXOXOXO
Luke Foster

PS: Oh yeah. How rude of me. How's Mrs Claus?
PSS: You could do so much better. ♥

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SACE - Public Education Program: Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (www.sace.ab.ca) provides crisis intervention, information, counseling & public education services. The following is a list of topics we cover in our presentations. If required we can customize a presentation to meet your needs. T: (780) 423-4102 / F: 421-8734 / E: info@sace.ab.ca; www.sace.ab.ca / 24 Hour Crisis Line: 423-4121

Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton offers support groups and workshops for parents. Various city locations. Call 481-1292 for information.

ARTIST TO ARTIST

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FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE
ARTIST/NON PROFIT CLASSIFIEDS

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ARTIST TO ARTIST

Female lead needed for short film. 20-30 yrs old to play drug dealer Jesus. Paid gig. Make-up, hair on set. e-m: josh@joshloewen.com

Century Dinner Theatre is now holding auditions for its 2007 season. Please email audition@shaw.ca to make an appointment.

Edmonton Fashion Week seeks aspiring fashion designers and stylists for Cheap and Chic Contest for Mar. 22-23. Media Exposure and Promotional opportunities. Please e-mail planetze@shaw.ca or call 428-3499. Studio located at 10055-80 Ave. Open Wed - Sat 12am-5pm.

Seeking dancers to perform for possible New Years Eve bash. Please drop by the studio if interested or call Planet Ze Design Center, 428-3499

Wanted: A Director/FilmMaker with a need for a project and a passion for Ninja's and Comedies. RaVeN@SeducingInternaiNeeds.com

ANIMATED FILM CONTEST FOR YOUNG CANADIANS- MAKE THE PIXELS DANCE: from now 'til Jan. 15, 2007 on the NFB's Focus on Animation Web site. Youth from 9-20 are invited to grab a cell phone or digital camera and make a film up to three minutes long, with the ordinary-or not so ordinary-materials around them. nfb.ca/animation.

Call for poets to participate in S Country Fair 2007, the Lotos Land spoken word stage. Email Blaine or Dee at mostvocal@canada.com, give a sample of work (2-3 poems), a bio.

Artsy Mum, a collective of emerging artists with children, wants you! Share inspiration and childcare! artsymum@gmail.com

Seeking dancers to perform for possible New Years Eve bash. Drop by the studio or call-Planet Ze Design: 428-3499

Planet Ze Design: looking for performing artists, models, dancers, and actors in regards to Edmonton Fashion Week. Call 428-3499 for more info. Drop-ins welcome. 10055-80 Ave.

Call to Enter: **ArtsHub Studio Gallery** features guest artists. Incl: Proposal; 10 slides/photos; CV; Artist statement. For info Ph Tim 423-2966.

Open Auditions: every Thursday evening, 8pm-12am at THE IVORY CLUB 2940 Calgary Trail, Edmonton's only Dueling Piano Bar. For info Ph Tim @ 904-7455.

Film and Video Arts Society: Register now for Video Kitchen and learn the basics of video production in this 3 month class. For info visit www.fava.ca or call 429-1671.

ARTISTS/PHOTOGRAPHERS: darkroom to share, excellent equipment. Nominal fee for chemicals/photo paper. Bernadette @ 868-7353 or email: belaberge@shaw.ca

MUSICIANS

Solid metal act seeking exp. bass player with pipes for serious project. Must be willing to experiment sonically. Pro gear/attitude. Casey@221-0419.

Drummer needed for 4-piece original rock band Cassidy. Weekly jams/regular gigs. Visit www.cassidyrocks.com or call Sean 424-0875.

Bassist, Leduc area, seeks other musicians. Rock, folk, blues, country, no jazz. Good gear, can gig, call 387-3343.

R&B band looking for trumpet player. www.chain-offools.ca; Danny at (780) 909-5160.

Vocal improvisation Group—just starting! The 1st Sat ea month; 1-4pm, using our voice as an instrument in impro-exercises, in free vocal improvisation. Estheranna (780) 432 2226 or e-mail: estheranna.st@gmx.ch

Local a cappella group seeking singers. Looking for one male and one female, or two females. Contact info@svenbld.com if you're interested.

Exp. mature **bass player w/vocals seeks** like-minded musicians for **weekly jam sessions** (classic rock covers). Occas. no bar gigs. No drugs. Mike 474-3740.

Multi-instrumentalist from Leduc **looking for other musicians** to create music together. 980-4009.

Wanted top 40/classic rock and blues bands. Promo pack and CD to J's Pub, 11827 St. Albert Trail.

LOST AND FOUND

FOUND: PINK IPOD on bus Nov. 7, Tues. ppb@telusplanet.net to ID.

VOLUNTEER

Christmas Morning Smiles Campaign • Meals on Wheels • Delivery of gifts: until Christmas Day. Ph 429-2020 for info.

If you enjoy working in an office environment and speaking with seniors, this is a great opportunity to help us out only one day a week. Great computer experience! Call Deanna at 732-1221.

Support the **Youth Emergency Shelter Society** Call 468-7070 to donate today—and help YESS fulfill their mission of giving youth at risk a chance!

Team leaders needed to volunteer for the **Christmas Bureau.** Schedule and oversee other volunteers at donation desks and special events. Ph Lana at 414-7682 or www.christmasbureau.ca.

Volunteer for New Year's Eve Downtown. Indoor and outdoor security, craft area supervisors and attendants and snowball throwing challenge attendants and more. Commitment of only 5 hours. Call Scott at 423-2822 ext. 31. www.eventsedmonton.ca for more info.

Want to make a difference in someone's life? Teach an adult to read and write. We are always looking for tutors in your area. Contact the **Centre for Family Literacy** 421-7323 or find us online at www.familit.ca

Mentors for Children/Youth. Supportive adult role models needed to share time and interests with kids in care. Evening or weekend placements. 2-3 hrs/wk. Various locations. Lily @ 432-1137, ext. 357.

Old Strathcona Youth Society: Looking for volunteers aged 21+ interested in working with high-risk youth, drop-in setting. Ph Naomi 496-5947, e-m: osyc@telus.net

We believe that all children have a right to grow in families and schools, and that all adults deserve to have real jobs, homes and friends. Ph 454-0701 and help to open the gates to community living in your area.

HipHopaYouth Group: looking for creative, leaders who want to learn more about liver health. Computer designers, health promoters, public speakers are welcome, we will provide mentoring. Ph Melissa 444-1547.

Fall hours of **Edmonton Bicycle Commuters, BikeWorks.** Edmonton's volunteer run bike shop are Wed 5-9pm and Sat 12 (noon)-5pm. Hours are subject to change, please call ahead to confirm: 433-2453.

Sponsor a guide dog pup for Christmas. www.albertaguidedog.com.

Help to broadcast news for blind and print-restricted Edmontonians! Email edmonton@voice-printcanada.com, or call 451-8331.

Do you want to have fun driving grandmas and grandpas? We pay your gas! If you can spare 2 hours per week/ Monday-Fridays during the day and have your own vehicle, we would love to hear from you. Call Deanna at Seniors Driving Centre at 732-1221.

Volunteer Yoga Instructor: Strathcona Place Senior Centre. Ph Rita Mittelman 433-5807.

Volunteers Needed! to teach conversational English to adult immigrants at a public library. Various locations, avail. 1-2 days/wk. No Experience required. Call Judy 424-3545.

Volunteers Needed! to be an interpreter for Spanish speaking newcomers to Canada. Call Judy 424-3545.

Volunteers Needed! for simple clerical and non-solicitation phone calls. Downtown, flexible schedule 2-8 hours/week. Call Judy 424-3545.

Literacy Tutors Needed. Assist adults with developmental disabilities to acquire basic reading and writing skills. Support provided. 1-2hrs/wk. Various locations. Lily @ 432-1137, ext. 357.

Volunteer for a more just society for immigrants and refugees. www.multiculturalcoalition.ca or call Janina 423-1973.

First formational meeting of the Canadian Church of Pagan Humanism. **Foundresses, nuns, and Directors needed.** For info and time, call Trey at (780) 477-2540 or cageytic@telus.net.

Volunteer in Strathcona Place Senior Citizen Centre Dining Room, Ph Terrie Shaw, 433-5808.

SEEKING musicians, literary and visual artists for the U of A Hospital's **Artist on the Walls** volunteer program. Must have formal experience/training and be able to commit 2-3 hrs/wk for 6 consecutive months. For information or to book an interview, please call 407-8428.

WE CAN FOOD BASKET SOCIETY seeks volunteers in the Westview Village neighbourhood. Ph (780) 413-4525 www.wecanfood.com

Volunteer for Canadian Mental Health contact CMHSA-ER at 414-6300 or check www.cmha-edmonton.ab.ca.

Brain Neurobiology Research Program at U of A seeks individuals suffering from **severe PMS** for research study. Ph 407-3775.

Brain Neurobiology Research Program at U of A seeks individuals suffering from **PANIC ATTACKS** for research study. Ph 407-3221. Reimbursement provided.

Brain Neurobiology Research Program at U of A seeks individuals suffering from **SOCIAL PHOBIA** for research study. Call 407-3221. Reimbursement provided.

Brain Neurobiology Research Program at U of A seeks individuals who have recently delivered and are suffering from **POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION** for research study. Call 407-3906. Reimbursement provided.

Volunteer to Strathcona Place Senior Citizen Centre Outreach Program. Ph Jo Royal 433-5808.

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers is seeking immigrants who are visual artists. www.emcn.ab.ca. Full details: Jacqueline Zaro, 424-7709 / E: jzaro@emcn.ab.ca

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each beyond the moon (and menstruation)

ALT.SEX.COLUMN

ANDREA NEMERSON
anemerson@altsexcolumn.com

Week, in your response to "to pill or no pill," I'm glad that you mentioned playing around with endocrine systems can be harmful. When I was diagnosed with anorexia, the doctors told me that I kept missing periods, I would be looking for things like low bone density, osteoporosis. It seems suspect that doctors and pharmaceutical companies are now advocating pills that limit a woman's period to four times a year. Can you tell me about it?

KEEPING MY PERIOD

In regards to "to pill or not to pill", can't they have sex during her period?

DEAR PERIOD

I don't get a chance to say this very often, but your doctors misspoke. There's no doubt that your endocrine system was messed up good while you were anorexic, but it wasn't the missing periods that were doing the damage. Both the amenorrhea (lack of periods) and the potential bone loss were symptoms of you messing with your endocrine system. When one hormone gets knocked out the entire chain is broken, and all sorts of potential havoc potentially ensues. You weren't menstruating because you weren't ovulating because your ovaries weren't getting the right hormonal cues because your pituitary gland wasn't sending them because your hypothalamus wasn't sending them because you were starving. It's actually a good idea, if you're an ovum, to avoid getting ovulated and fertilized while there's no good material around to build a baby with.

Somewhere along in there your ovaries

also failed to get the hint to produce lots of estrogen, which is required for the absorption of calcium, and there go your bones. So yes, of course it's potentially dangerous to mess around with your endocrine system, but we should remember that millions of women do just that everyday when they take their pill and they're just fine. Better, even, since they're not having to squeeze out another baby every year or so for the entire span of their reproductive years, the way our "ansisters" did, or as women still do wherever reliable birth control is unavailable or forbidden. And speaking of our ancestors...

We (the Western, industrialized, supermarket-shopping We) are the freaks in a long line line of normal people. As any number of evolutionary biologists and other researchers have pointed out recently, it is not at all the natural state of women to menstruate every damn month for 45 (damn) years. Contemporary

hunter-gatherer (mostly gatherer) women start late, have a bunch of babies, breast-feed them forever, and die young, toting up about 100 or a 150 periods in a life time (depends where I looked this up). By contrast, supermarket women reach for the tampon box approximately 450 times. No wonder we're crabby.

SO IS MENSTRUATION "natural?" Well, obviously, but an argument can be made that not menstruating is even more so. What seems a brute biological fact ("women bleed every month") turns out to be in part a social construct. Isn't that cool? This sort of thinking isn't really new—the developers of the original Pill built in the the bloody part, the placebos at the end of the cycle, because they thought not menstruating would freak women out, not because it was medically necessary—but it's not the sort of thing people tend to talk about. It will be, though, by necessity, and soon. As new

products make four periods a year or no periods a year become increasingly popular, menstruation will become a lifestyle choice like any other. This will disgust the more moon-goddess type feminists and please the "it's all about choice" ones, but for everyone else, after a while it will just seem, well, natural.

You also asked, very reasonably, why the couple in the original letter (she wanted to take something to suppress her periods so they could have romantic LTR weekends) couldn't just have sex, blood or no blood. The answer is they could, of course. I'm willing to bet that they hadn't even discussed and dismissed that option. If a woman's "monthlies" turn out to be at least partly a social invention, the menstrual taboo is entirely one. Barring the presence of something nasty, blood-borne and contagious, there's no reason on Earth why a couple can't have a threesome with him, her and Aunt Flo. LOVE, ANDREA

VOLUNTEER

Tutors urgently needed! Call P.A.L.S. at 424-2514 to help someone learn English as a Second Language. Training and materials are provided.

Wants Club is seeking volunteers to become part of the global Kiwanis. For info contact Colin Reichle at 460-9639 or Marg Day at 476-5033.

Become a friend to a NEW Canadian. Dulari at 474-8445 or www.eisa-edmonton.org

Volunteers needed to teach English as a Second Language to newcomers during the summer. Morning or afternoons at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. Call Marty at 423-9516.

Wants a distress line volunteer. Training classes in Nov. Ph The Support Network, 732-6648. www.thesupportnetwork.com

Volunteer for the Canadian Birkbecker Society Festival Director; Chief of Timing (Finish Line); Chief of Long Starts; Chief of Clothing. For the event: Sat. Feb. 10. E-mail: info@canadianbirkie.com/ www.canadianbirkie.com / Ph: 430-7153.

Wants to find ON-LINE AUCTION for Alberta items. Donate items, bid, have a great time. Carmen 429-0137 x233. http://auction.edmonton24hourrelay.com.

Tutors urgently needed. Call P.A.L.S., 424-5514. To help someone learn English as a second language. Training materials provided.

Red Cross is seeking energetic, caring & committed community members to become **Volunteer Prevention Educators** for its **Respected: Violence and Abuse Prevention** program. Training session this fall. Contact Deanna Key (780) 423-2680. E: deanna.key@redcross.ca. www.redcross.ca

The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton needs volunteers to take calls on our 24-hour Crisis line. For information and upcoming training dates ph 423-4102.

CPAWS Edmonton Boreal Education: Volunteer Presenters needed. Contact CPAWS Ed. Team at education@cpaws-edmonton.org for info.

Volunteer Drivers needed for the Seniors Volunteer Driving Centre, 2-3 hrs Mon-Fri. Ph Anna 732-1221.

Society of Seniors Caring About Seniors (SSCAS), drivers needed to assist frail seniors to appointments; \$8/ride. Ph Val 465-0311.

Wecan Food Basket Seeks Volunteers: Opportunity for people on limited incomes to access quality nutritious food at affordable prices. Volunteers needed in the Bonnie Doon area to help process food orders. Ph 413-4525.

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Amber: Outgoing redhead; just 18; brand new to the industry, 34B-26-32; very open minded; call for availability; 441-1330.

Chrissy: Sexy hot Italian w/ jet black hair; very busty; 23; ask her about special; call for availability; 441-1330.

Mae-Ling: 20 yr old Asian; great body; loves to pamper; no rush service; a delicate oriental gem; call for availability; 965-4968.



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